Catholic Letter;

OR,

REFLECTIONS

ON THE

Reflections Defence

OF

Dr. *Stillingfleet*'s First Letter to Mr. *G.*

Against the

ANSWER

To the Arguing Part of it.

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REFLECTIONS

ON

A Recent Duel.

IN

ANSWER

TO

LONDON:

TO THE
READER.

PErhaps it has ſcarce been ſeen hitherto, that all our Polemical Conteſts were reduc'd within ſo narrow a compaſs. My Firſt Letter inſiſted chiefly on Two ſhort Diſcourſes: Whereof the one undertook to ſhew the Nullity of the Rule of Faith, claim'd by Dr. St. and his Proteſtants. The other the Abſolute Certainty of the Catholic Rule; and the whole Controverſie was, in ſhort, about the Certainty or Uncertainty of Chriſtian Faith. Both of thoſe Diſcourſes were preſum'd by us to be Concluſive; and ſo we offer'd a fair Advantage to our Adverſary, if he could ſhew clearly any of our Propoſitions was falſe, or their Connexion ſlack. Hence I had good hopes that Reply of mine would have brought our Controverſie very near an end, had Dr. St's Return been ſuitable to our Attempts. Eſpecially, it had brought the Buſineſs to a Criſis, had he been pleas'd to ſhew the Abſolute Certainty of his Rule, or of his Faith, as grounded on that Rule, which was juſtly expected. But Error Nonpluſt has already convinc'd the World, That the bringing any Diſpute to Principles or Grounds, agrees not with their Conſtitution who have none. While our Expectations were thus rais'd, no News could we hear of Dr. St. An Anſwer comes out from another hand; not very obliging to him in my opinion, whether he were or were not preacquainted with it: For if he were (and 'tis hard to

imagine that a Piece writ in his Defence had not both his Direction, Inſpection, and Approbation) People will ſuſpect he foreſaw what would come of it, and was glad the Shame ſhould fall on another; and that he has but little Kindneſs for his Friend, whom he ſuffers to Write on this manner. If he were not, they will ſuſpect his Friends have as little Kindneſs for him, *and leſs Regard, who manage his Cauſe without his Privity. However it be, the Anſwer affords no work for a Replier, but the moſt ungrateful one in the World; to be perpetually telling men of their Faults, without the leaſt hopes of doing them good, or contributing to their amendment; They being of ſuch a nature, that they are our Adverſaries moſt neceſſary ſupports in their unlucky circumſtances. And indeed, the whole Piece ſeems to have no other Deſign, but to bring the Diſpute into a Wrangle. Yet this Profit may be hoped, that every moderate Judgment will ſee by the very methods we take, which ſide deſires and ſincerely endeavours that* Truth *may appear. It would be much a greater, if Dr.* St. *or whom he pleaſes to employ, would* plainly ſhew *the* * **Abſolute Certainty** *which he* ſays *they* have; *or elſe* plainly confeſs *they* have it not. *But this is not to be hoped. Yet I entreat the Reader, becauſe I diſtruſt my own Credit, to ſollicit him (if he thinks it not too dangerous for him) to do the one or the other; and in doing it, to uſe as much* Reaſon *as he* will, *and as little* Laughing *as he* can. *We are ſufficiently ſatisfy'd of his faculty of* Riſibility, *and would be glad to ſee a touch or two of his* Rationality.

* Second Letter, *P.* 14.

RE-

REFLECTIONS

ON

Dr. *St*'s Reflecters Defence

Addreſt to Himſelf.

1. I Enquire not, Sir, ſince it concerns me not to know, why you would needs become a Party, or rather an Advocate in a Cauſe, depending between Dr. *St.* and another. If it were *deſir'd* of you, you are to be excus'd, ſo you perform well what you undertook; that is, to *defend* the Dr. eſpecially his *Logick*, and his *Abſolute Certainty*; But if you had nothing to *draw you in*, beſides the Weight of what you had to ſay, I think you might very well have *kept out*. You begin like a man of Art, with prepoſſeſſing your Reader againſt your Adverſary, and in favour of your ſelf: and ſo would have me paſs for a pleaſant, artificial, deluding Companion; and your ſelf for a man, *Godly* even to *ſcruple*, and who cannot barely repeat the Metaphor (of *holding ones Cards*) without * asking *Pardon*. The Reader will find, by your writing, to which of us your former Character is moſt like. In the mean time, I own the Confidence of talking of Self-evidence, and Abſolute Certainty, and Infallibility; and bleſs the Mercy of God, for making me of a Communion, in which

* P. 2.

which that Language is Proper; and humbly pray Him to preserve me from the *Face* (if I must not say *Confidence*) of setting up for a Guide without them. For, between a *blind Guide*, and one who *sees not his way*, I think the difference is not great. Much good may your *Modesty* do you; your *Obscurity*; your *Uncertainty* and *Fallibility*. If your Conscience perswade you these are the best qualifications of Christan Doctrin, and best Security which God would provide for the Souls of men, mine would sooner use Twenty Metaphors, than perswade People to venture their Eternity upon them. But, at worst, it is no greater fault in me sure, than in * Dr. St. to talk of *Absolute Certainty*. Unless he perhaps *repent*, and would be content an unfortunate Word inconsiderately blurted out, should be *retracted* for him by *another*, which 'tis not so handsome to retract *himself*; whereas I, like a man of Confidence, *meant* what I *said*, and *stand to it*; and can have no good opinion of those *modest* men, that say and unsay, as suites with the occasion.

* *Dr.* St's *first Letter*, p. 7. & *second*, p. 14.

2. To fall to our Business, your Discourse has Three Parts. The First reflects on what I said of turning Proof over from your *Protestants* to *Catholicks*: The Second pretends to answer my Argument; And the Third, Mr. *G's*. Some *Gleanings* in your Language there are besides; but this is the main Crop. Upon the first Point, since Proof does or does not belong to Protestants, there is nothing more to be said to purpose, but either to shew that Proof does not belong to them, or to bring it if it does. But let us see how you handle the matter.

3. I had expresst my self to grieve and wonder there should be so little value for Souls among your Party, as to send Men to the Tribunal of God, *without furnishing them with assurance that they can justifie their Accounts themselves*.

But

But if (say you) *they may be assured they can give up a good account, may they not be assur'd that they have the Grace of God, and of their Justification and Salvation? And then what becomes of the Council of* Trent? Of what *Account* do you speak, I beseech you? If, as I did, of an Account of *Faith*, I hope you will not perswade us a man cannot know *why he believes*, without knowing whether he be in the State of *Grace*, or *sure* of his Salvation; and therefore, I hope you will not persist to think it *hard to conceive how the bare assurance of the Truth of what is taught, should enable a man to justifie his account, without an Assurance of Grace too*; since his very *Assurance* of the *Truth* which he believes is a *Justification of his Account*, for *believing* it. If you speak of an Account of our *whole lives*, it becomes you huge well to talk of my *Confidence*, who have your self the Confidence to turn things against the plain Scope of my Discourse, against my plain Words, and (I much fear) against your own Knowledge. For where the only Question was of the Certainty of Protestant Faith, or (which is all one) of Christian Faith, upon *your* Protestant Grounds: an Account why your Protestants believe, who cannot tell whether Christ taught it, was the only Account that belongs to that Question. But what needs more? Are not you, I too, fully perswaded, while we are writing this very Controversie, that we maintain the Truth of our Faith by such arguments as can justifie us not to have fail'd of *that* Duty; and if we do so, cannot both us justifie our selves in that particular, and all who assent upon them, to God as well as man? And cannot either of us bring a solid Argument to prove that Christ Taught what we hold, without being assur'd before-hand we are in the state of *Grace*, and shall be *sav'd*? Or, Is this any thing to the *Council of Trent*, as you pretend? What paltring is this then,

P. 3.

P. 4.

then, to pretend, that no Controvertiſt can bring a Proof that concludes Chriſt Taught ſuch a Doctrin, and ſo juſtifies them that adhere to the Truth it evinces; for fear (forſooth) of making men ſure of their *Juſtification* and *Salvation*, and of contradicting the *Council of Trent*. A pretty fetch, to excuſe your ſelves from bringing any Arguments worth a Straw to juſtifie your Followers, for believing upon them! Alas! you have ſtore enough of them; but out of pure Conſcience (we muſt think) dare not produce them, for fear of *enabling* your People to *juſtifie* themſelves for not believing raſhly; or for fear of making them *ſure of their Salvation*.

4. I had alledg'd farther, that till Proteſtants produce the Grounds which prove their Faith to be *True*, it cannot with Reaſon be held *Truth*. You put my Diſcourſe firſt in my Words, only leaving out thoſe which did not pleaſe you, and then diſguiſe it in your own, and laugh at it for being *too plainly* True: For *plain Truth*, it ſeems, is a *ridiculous* thing with you; and you are of opinion, that the more plain it is, that you ought to bring your *Proofs*, the leſs you are oblig'd to bring them. Thence you ſtart aſide to tell us, that *the vulgar* Catholic *has leſs certainty than the vulgar* Proteſtant; becauſe the one has only the *Word of his Prieſt*, the other *has the Word of his Miniſter and the Word of God in Scripture beſides*. Do you think Catholic Prieſts are at liberty to tell the vulgar what Faith they pleaſe, as your Miniſters may interpret Scripture as ſeems beſt to their Judgment of Diſcretion! when you cannot but know, they dare not teach them any Faith, but what the Church holds; nor does the Church hold any but upon Tradition? Again, You do well to ſay your People have it in *Scripture*, or in a *Book*, for they have it no where elſe. And you know the vulgar *Socinians* and *Presby-*

Presbyterians, and all the reſt, have it as much there, as your vulgar *Proteſtants*, notwithſtanding all you have ſaid, or can ſay; and then, I ſuppoſe, you do not think they Truly have the Word of God on their ſide, unleſs you think the Word of God ſays different things to different Hearers. When you prove that you and your Miniſters have any Certain means of making it out, that the Senſe, which by their *explaining* and *catechiſing* they put upon the Written Characters, is *truly* God's *Meaning*, you will do ſomething, make many Converts, and my ſelf one among the reſt: Till then, to poſſeſs your vulgar Proteſtants with a Conceit of having the Word of God, is meerly to delude them. Sure you wanted a Common-place to furniſh out your Paragraph, or elſe writ it in a Dream. For, *to tell me, that *Truth can depend no more* upon the *Saying of a* Romiſh *Prieſt, than of an* Engliſh *Miniſter*, when I tell you, it depends *not* on *any* private man's *Sayings*, is not a Reply of a man well awake. In two words, *Bring you Proofs*, ſay I; *the Saying*, that is, the *No-proof of a Miniſter*, is as good as the *No-proof of a Prieſt*, ſay you; And the ſhort and the long is; *No Proof, I thank you.* * P. 5.

5. But *two things*, ſay you, *follow from my Poſition, which you fear I will not grant. The Firſt is, That if we cannot with Reaſon hold a Truth till the Intrinſical Grounds of it be produc'd, we cannot with reaſon hold any thing for a Truth, namely, becauſe the Church of* Rome *hath determined it; for her Determination is no Intrinſical Ground of the Truth, but only an outward Teſtimony or Declaration of it; and then what's become either of her Infallibility or Authority to command our Faith!* As ſlips of honeſt Ignorance deſerve compaſſion and inſtruction, and I do not know this to be any more, I will be ſo charitable, as to ſet you right. *Authority*, amongſt thoſe who already admit it Ibid.

for *True*, has Force to prove that to be *Truth*, which depends on it, and will conclude againſt thoſe who allow its veracity, if it be ſhewn to be engag'd againſt them. But it has not this Effect upon *Human* Nature by its proper Power as 'tis meer *Authority*; but, becauſe *Intrinſical Mediums* juſtifie it to be worthy to be rely'd on. Whence, let that Authority come into diſpute, it will loſe it's Credit, unleſs it can be prov'd by *ſuch Mediums* to deſerve what it pretends to. And, hence, you ſee we go about to demonſtrate the Infallibility of the Church's *Human Authority*, in deriving down Chriſtian Faith. To clear this farther, I advance this Fundamental Poſition; *viz. No Authority deſerves any Aſſent farther than Reaſon gives it to deſerve*: And, therefore, without abating any thing of our reſpect, we may affirm, that the Authority of the whole Catholick Church would be no greater than that of an old Woman, (or one of your ſober Enquirers) were there *no more Reaſon* to be given for believing the *former*, than there is for believing the *later*. And conſonantly to this Doctrin, we declare to you, that, When Dr. *St.* comes to argue, either out of Authority of Writers, or Inſtances depending on their Authority, againſt Tradition; he ſhall be preſt to make out by *Intrinſical Mediums* they are *Abſolutely Certain*; or they ſhall deſervedly be look'd upon and contemn'd as *Inconcluſive*. By this time, I hope, you ſee that *All Truths* are built on *Intrinſical Mediums*; and, that whereas you apprehended they would *overthrow* our Church's Teſtimony or Authority, ſuch *Mediums* (in caſe we produce them) are the beſt means to eſtabliſh it, and give it force upon our ſelves and others: As alſo, how it comes that the Church can *oblige to Belief*: which is not by a dry *commanding our Faith*, as you apprehend; but by having its Human Authority ſo ſolidly grounded upon Reaſon, that

that it ſelf becomes a Motive able to beget, according to the beſt Maxims of Rational Nature, ſuch an Aſſent in us, to this *matter of Fact*, that Chriſt and his Apoſtles taught ſuch Doctrins. But, what a put off is this? We ſay Truth is not therefore Truth, becauſe of mens bare *Sayings* or *Authority*; and therefore demand your Proofs from *Intrinſical Mediums*, (for thither it muſt come, e're it be known for Truth) to make out what you pretend; Your Anſwer, in effect, is, You are *afraid* to do it, leſt you ſhould deſtroy our Church's Infallibility and Authority. How much is our Church in your Debt, that the Care of Her makes you careleſs of thoſe Souls in your own Church, to whom you owe this ſatisfaction.

6. The ſecond thing you fear I will not grant, is, *A Judgment of Diſcretion to common People*, with which they may *diſcern the Intrinſical Grounds of Truth*. You gave your ſelf at firſt the Character of a ſcrupulous man; and I ſee by this, you have a mind to maintain it. You know, that thoſe who *write* and *print*, can have no deſign their Books ſhould not be *read*; and you know thoſe that *read*, will and muſt *judge* of what they do read; and yet your ſcrupuloſity can *fear* I will not allow the Common People to *judge* of the Intrinſical Grounds of Truth, who take pains they may judge, put it into their power to judge, and out of my own, and ſo cannot hinder them, tho' I would. Indeed, I think it no great ſign of a Judgment of Diſcretion, to pretend to diſcern the *Truth* of Faith, by Lights that do not ſhew it to be *True*; and, upon ſuch a Judgment I wiſh and labour People ſhould not venture their Souls. But I diſallow no other *Judgment of Diſcretion*; full well knowing, that the more Judgment a man has, and the more he uſes it, the ſooner and better he will diſcern, that the Doctrin of Chriſt cannot be ſecurely learnt from thoſe of P. 5.

Your and Dr. *St's* Principles. But, Why all this? Or, How come I to ſtand in your way? Do I hinder you from ſhewing *Proteſtants* that *They* are Certain of their Faith? *They* allow a Judgment of Diſcretion, if it ſtick there, whether *I* do or no. But you cannot gratifie Catholics with Proof, it ſeems, becauſe they are *againſt* Judgment of Diſcretion; nor Proteſtants, becauſe they are for it; that is, in plain terms, you will not prove the Certainty of your Faith at all. You conclude very conformably, that *I* * *have ſet us all on even Ground*: Yes, moſt Mathematically *even*: For I ſet *Abſolute Certainty* on the one ſide, and *Uncertainty* on the other; and this, in your Language, is *even Ground.*

* P. 6.

P. 6. 7. Your next Paragraph ſays, *I fall upon the Certainty of Proteſtant Faith*; which I hope eaſily to *overthrow.* The Reader cannot but apprehend now, that I am making Arguments againſt it, of which you know very well I did not think. Where do I fall upon this Matter! Why, I ſaid, *Suppoſe Mr.* G. *could not prove Proteſtants are certain, are they therefore certain?* The meaning of which words is clearly this, that the Certainty of Proteſtant Faith muſt depend on their own Proofs for it, not on any Man's being able or not able to prove the contrary, which is what Dr. *St.* would have put upon us. So that (to avoid proving, which was demanded) you put upon me the direct contrary to what I affirm'd, *viz.* That the Certainty of Proteſtant Faith *does* depend upon our not *proving* they have none; whereas I contend it does not depend upon it. What ſhifts are you put to, that you may eſcape this dangerous buſineſs of *proving* your Faith Certain. Well, but did I ſay true, or no? You trouble not your Head with ſuch impertinent thoughts, but fall to propheſie what I *imagin'd*. *This* (ſay you) *he firſt imagins, that all the certainty of our Faith is this, That Papiſts*

piſts cannot prove it to be uncertain, and that *then I make ſport with my own Imagination.* Better and better! Not to take notice of your ſhuffling in, that Papiſts cannot prove Proteſtants are not Certain, which I am very far from *imagining*; becauſe I ſaid our *not-proving* the contrary, is *no* Certainty to Proteſtants, he will have me *imagin* it *is* their Certainty; nay, *All their Certainty:* when he knows I am aware, and confeſs they pretend to Scripture for it; and, *p.* 26. urg'd them to make out they had Abſolute Certainty by *It.* The reſt is, to tell me I play, and you will be ſerious: And your way of being ſerious, when you have choſen to fall upon this Queſtion, whether Proteſtants become Certain by our not proving them Uncertain, is, without ſaying a word to it, to skip to another Paragraph of mine.

8. Where I had ſaid, that *Any man may find it confeſt to his hand, by Proteſtants, that they have no Abſolute Certainty of their Faith:* For which I cited Dr. *Tillotſon.* And you tell me firſt, that Dr. *Tillotſon* is an *excellent man*; and ſo he is; for he excells even your ſelf (which requires a great Talent in your way of handling Controverſie) in all your Arts. Next, to take your turn in *imagining*, you imagin ſingle Dr. *Tillotſon too many for all the Traditionary Catholicks to anſwer his Rule of Faith.* P. 6. And I imagin, that Dr. *Tillotſon* knows the contrary: For I have been inform'd, Dr. *Tillotſon* had the offer of an *Anſwer*, from a Traditionary Catholic long ago, upon condition he would contribute his Credit to get it printed: which he thought not fit to do. Since I perceive you do not know an Anſwer when you ſee it, unleſs the word [*Anſwer*] be in the *Title-page*, I will not tell you it is anſwer'd *already*, tho' I believe I can make it good: But I will venture a fair Wager with you, it will be anſwer'd, in his own Formal way, every jot as ſoon as

Reaſon

P. 7. *Reaſon againſt Railery.* Laſtly, You deny that this Confeſſion *That Proteſtants have no Certainty* (no *Abſolute Certainty*, if it pleaſe you) *of their Faith*, is to be found in the pages cited, or any other part of Dr. *Tillotſon*'s Book. If you do not underſtand Engliſh, I cannot help it; but any one that does, may find in the laſt of the pages cited. As far as ſilence gives conſent, it is own'd by Dr. *Tillotſon* himſelf: For it was laid before him by *Reaſon againſt Railery*, and with him it has lain theſe fifteen Years; and yet you would perſwade us *you* ſee it not, *nor I neither, if I may be believ'd againſt my ſelf.*

See *Reaſon againſt Railery*, p. 97. to p. 114.

Ibid.

9. Your Rhetorick, Sir, is very great, if it will do you this piece of Service; but let us hear it however. I had ſaid to Dr. *St. p.* 23. *You ſeem to grant you are thus* Abſolutely-Certain *or Infallible, by vertue of Tradition.* Upon which Theme you thus declame. *How? confeſs we have no Certainty* (no *Abſolute Certainty*, I beſeech you again) *and yet ſeem to grant we are Infallible, and that too by Vertue of Tradition. —Some people had need of good Memories.* As if it were ſo ſtrange a thing for Proteſtants to contradict one another, or the ſame man himſelf; or, that there needed Memory to obſerve what paſſes every day. By the favour of your Exclamations, Dr. *St.* did ſay at the Conference, that *They are Abſolutely Certain, that they now hold all the ſame Doctrin that was taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, —by the Divine Revelations contained in the Writings of the New Teſtament; and of thoſe Revelations by the Univerſal Teſtimony of the Chriſtian Church.* And in his Firſt Letter he did deſire Mr. *G.* to *prove that they have no Abſolute Certainty as to the Rule of their Faith, altho' they have a larger and firmer Tradition for it than we can have for the points of Faith in difference.* And Dr. *Tillotſon* did ſay in his *Rule of Faith, p.* 118. *We are not infallibly certain that any Book* (ſpeaking of Scrip-

My Firſt Letter, p. 23.

Dr. St's ſecond Letter, p. 14.

Ibid. p. 15.

Dr. St's Firſt Letter, p. 7.

Scripture) *is ſo ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whoſe Name it bears; or, that this is the ſence of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it: It is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe.* Now, if one of thoſe Writers do not ſeem to grant that they are *Abſolutely Certain*, (or Infallible) and that too by vertue of *Tradition*, and the Other confeſs, that they have *no Abſolute Certainty* of their Faith, Engliſh is no intelligible Language in *England*. If you think this a Contradiction, you may talk with your *excellent men* about it, and let me alone; till you can ſhew I talk againſt my ſelf by relating barely what others ſay. Muſt my Memory be blam'd, when their Judgments are in fault? For a Contradiction it is, if *Abſolutely Certain* and *Infallible* be the ſame; which I both prov'd formerly, and it will come into play again e're long. However I only ſaid they *ſeem'd* to grant, *&c.* For the Tenet of *Faiths Uncertainty*, if I may ſpeak what I think, is *hearty* in them; it's *Abſolute Certainty* is but *ſeeming*; and ſurely, 'tis lawful to ſay he *ſeems* to hold it, who in print avows it, whether he do *indeed* hold it or no.

10. From hence you paſs to a company of Traditionary Gentlemen; with whom if you have buſineſs, I have none, and think yours cannot be very great, ſince you take this time to diſpatch it. You may diſpatch with me, if you pleaſe, firſt; and ſay what you will to them afterwards. Dr. *Tillotſon*, you ſay, in his *Rule of Faith, p.* 120. *&c.* ſaid great matters of them, and *if I find them wrong'd, I have the liberty to vindicate them.* I know you would invent twenty impertinent Tasks for me, ſo I would but forget the point in hand, and excuſe you from *proving*. But how careleſs are you of what you ſay. One of thoſe Authors was occaſionally vindicated in the *Letter of Thanks*, and the *notorious Abuſe* of him, made *P.* 7.

good

good againſt that Dr's Excuſe, in *Reaſon againſt Railery*, *p.* 227. to *p.* 234. And were it ſeaſonable, perhaps we ſhould find the others *abus'd* too, or wilfully miſunderſtood. But, What is this to our preſent buſineſs? At laſt, you conclude with a *ſeaſonable Warning*, as you call it; Ibid. That, *if any Proteſtant ſhall begin to plead Infallibility by Vertue of Tradition, it will behove Catholicks in time to ſeek out a new one.* Why ſo, I beſeech you! This is as much as to ſay, that, as ſoon as Proteſtants take a fancy to any thing that belongs to Catholicks, it is *their own*, and Catholicks muſt preſently yield it up. Your reaſon is, becauſe *When both Parties pretend alike to Infallibility and Tradition, neither of theſe can be any longer a fit Medium to prove which is in the Right.* What will be when both *pretend alike*, we ſhall ſee when the Time comes. But, Why muſt they, or how can they *pretend alike?* Can Tradition infallibly deliver contrary things? Why ſhould *Tradition* be a *Medium* leſs fit to determine between Catholick and Proteſtant, which of them has right to *Infallibility*, when both pretend to it by Tradition, than a *Deed* to determine between *Peter* and *Paul*, which has right to the Eſtate, which both claim by the ſame *Deed?* Do their contrary Pretences hinder it from being ſeen whether the *Deed* be for *Peter* or *Paul*; or *Tradition* for Catholicks or Proteſtants? Or do you think a Proteſtant, to get *Tradition* on his ſide, has no more to do, but to *pretend* to it. At this rate, Scripture cannot be a fit *Medium* for you, becauſe all Hereticks pretend to it, and *alike* too. But it ſeems, that with you, when two pretend, One with Right, the Other without it, they both pretend *alike*, or with equal Title. Of which it was, indeed, *ſeaſonable* to *warn us*; for neither we, (nor any man well in his wits) would have hit on it of our ſelves. Thus much in return to your preſent Excurſion. But what's become of your

proof

Proof all this while? Inſtead of bringing that, you tell me, *I fall upon Proteſtant Certainty*, of which there was not the leaſt ſhew; that *I ſpeak againſt my ſelf*; that *Dr.* Tillotſon *is an Excellent man*, that he did not confeſs, *&c.* Out of which rambling Talk we are to conclude, That your Proteſtant Proof needs not appear; but to make us amends for this conſtant Neglect, you will needs give us a *ſeaſonable Warning*; and that's worth all the Proof in the World.

11. Yet we ſhall have this Proof, I hope, in the next Paragraph: For you give me notice then, *When your Certainty* (*Abſolute Certainty*, I pray you again for Dr. *Stillingfleet*'s ſake) *is once prov'd, no more is needful to confute our Infallibility*, and that *you are not afraid to undertake making it good, even All that I here call upon you to prove.* And you do not raiſe our Expectations ſure only to defeat them. Yet it bodes ill, that you would have the word [*Abſolutely*] left out a while: A motion which would make a jealous man ſuſpect you had a deſign to palm a Certainty upon us which will prove *no-Certainty*. But you are *Abſolute* Maſter of your own Proofs, and may put in and put out what you pleaſe. I, for my part, cannot conſent to leave that word out; becauſe it is not *fair* to alter a word of Dr. *St*'s; nor *poſſible*, tho' it were *fair*. For you and I cannot make him *not have ſaid* what he *has ſaid*; and, tho' we ſhould agree to *ſuppreſs* that Word amongſt our ſelves, it will ſtill be found in his *Two Letters*, do what we can. But, now we are thus far onward, 'tis pity to break for a ſingle Word; and to give you your due, you begin to deal here very fair with us. *We manifeſt*, ſay you. Very well: Now the Buſineſs is on the Hinges again; and here is not only *Proof*, but *Manifeſt Proof* coming. But what is it which you *manifeſt*? Why, *the Certainty you have of Scripture*; and P. 8. Ibid.

that, *after the same manner as we do our* Rule or Scripture, I know not which you mean. But, I see you need a *good Memory* too as well as your Neighbours: For you do not remember that *Absolute Certainty of Scripture* is not the Point to be prov'd, tho' I told you so in the very page you cite. I wav'd that point, not to be more severe than needs, and put Protestants upon a Task which I told them withal *They* would find a hard one; but from which, while we both agree that Scripture is Certain, I was willing to excuse them. Again, You forget that just before you wonder'd at me for saying, *You seem to grant you are thus Absolutely Certain or Infallible by vertue of Tradition*; and now you say, *you manifest your Certainty in the same manner as we do*; and sure you do not forget, that *Our manner of manifesting is by Tradition.* But, to lose no more time about that which *is not* the point, pray How do you *prove* that which is?

P. 9. 12. Why, *you think you do sufficiently prove the Certainty of every Article of your Faith, when you shew it to be solidly grounded on God's Word*; and, this being shewn, wonderful things will follow. In the mean time you speak Oracle, and have all the reason in the world to think that you *prove sufficiently*, when you *solidly shew*. Neither did you need to mince it with *sufficiently*, for 'tis very *Absolutely Certain* you *do* prove when you solidly *shew* or *prove*; and this you might have said with less Ceremony if you had been pleas'd. For we can see well enough, that when there is Proof, there is Proof, tho' our Expectation had not been screw'd up with your professions of *Courage to undertake*, or *Skill to perform*. This is just to invite your Company, say Grace to them, tell them you think you treat them *sufficiently*, when you set *Solid Meat* on the Board; and, all this done, send them hungry away. Pray, when will that *When* of yours be?

When

When will the day come, in which you will ſhew your Faith to be ſolidly-grounded on the Word of God? Every *Article*, as you word it, (to bring it, I ſuppoſe, to your ſolid Endleſs way of Quoting and Criticizing) is too much at preſent. We are not got ſo far yet: It will be time to talk of This or That Article, when This or That Article is in Queſtion. At preſent, you are to ſhew, if you can, that *you* have *any* Means, unleſs you take *Ours* to ground *any* Article ſolidly on the Word of God. You are to ſhew your interpretation of it is *Abſolutely Certain*, and that God's Word *means* as you teach it does. Otherwiſe your Confident Talking will not hinder us from ſeeing that you wretchedly delude your Followers; while you are your ſelves truly *Uncertain*, whether any thing you teach them be *True*, and Conſcious that you *are ſo*.

13. And yet, tho' you have ſerved us thus, you have a ſetch to lay the blame upon me, for being harder to you than the Laws of Diſputation are. *I will have them*, he ſays, *prove two things more: Firſt, that they are abſolutely certain of All This.* By the way, I take for granted, that by *All This*, you mean All which Dr. *St.* affirm'd, which was All of which I deſir'd *Proof*. And Secondly, *Not only this, but of all that more which Our Saviour taught his Apoſtles.* Of this Charge I own the firſt half. I did demand proof of *Abſolute Certainty*, and that for *All This*; and ſhall perſiſt to demand it, till you ſhew me the Diſputation-Law-Book, which allows a Diſputant to ſay what he pleaſes, and *chuſe* whether he will *prove* it or no when he has done. Dr. *Stillingfleet* did affirm, that *You are Abſolutely Certain*; and, abſolutely Certain that *you now hold All the ſame Doctrin that was Taught by Chriſt & his Apoſtles.* And of *All this*, all the Laws of Diſputation that I ever read or heard of, warrant me to demand proof;

P. 9

Dr. St's ſecond Letter, p. 14.

And you ſhall permit me to believe there was ſomething in the Wind, beſides thoſe *Laws*, which makes you decline to give it. I had been Logician good enough, if you had known how to have *prov'd*. Yes, but I make *Abſolutely-Certain* and *Infallible* all one. I make them all one! Why, all Mankind made them ſo before I was born. Take all the Men who pretend to Abſolute Certainty, and all the ways by which they pretend; Authority, Demonſtration, Senſe, Experience, or what you will; and ſee whether all Mankind agree not, that when there is room for *Deceit*, there is no *Abſolute Certainty*; and let a man pretend to be Abſolutely Certain as much as he will, if he *be*, or *may be deceiv'd*, he will be but laught at for his pains, and not thought *Abſolutely Certain* by any man in the World, no not by your *Reflecting* ſelf. And yet you would perſwade us I break the Laws of Diſputation by underſtanding that Word as every body elſe does. Certainly, you would make a pleaſant Law-maker for *Diſputation*: For when you have forbid us to underſtand words as others do, we could *diſpute* no longer, nor ſo much as *converſe*; for there would be no knowing one anothers meaning.

14. But if I take that word *ill*, how muſt I do to take it *well*? Not to miſtake a ſecond time, I would be glad to know how *your ſelf* take it, who to be ſure take it *right*. But this you keep to your ſelf; and you have reaſon, if by *Abſolutely Certain* you mean *not Abſolutely Certain*, which I ſuſpect is the true caſe; and muſt be, unleſs you would have it mean *nothing*. Otherwiſe, why might not we know what you will let it mean, if you will not let it mean what I and every body elſe think it does. Since you leave me to my ſelf, I ſhall, at the hazard of incurring again the Penalties of your Laws of *Diſputation*, venture to think that He, who will not ſuffer thoſe who are Abſo-

lutely

lutely Certain to be *Infallible*, will have them *Fallible*; that is, *Deceivable* in that whereof they are Abſolutely Certain; and for ought they can tell, *actually deceiv'd*. And then he will have Proteſtants believe that their Religion is the ſame that is taught by Chriſt, *ſtand firm*, and *draw over* to it as many as they can, and vex and perſecute their Neighbours whom they *cannot*; prefer it before the Unity of the Church, and keep up differences in Religion with as much jealous Concern, as if the Wall of Diviſion in the Church were the only ſafe Fence of the Nation; in a word, ſtake their Souls and Eternity upon it: When, all the while, he cannot Abſolutely tell whether it be *True* or *No*; nay, *knows* he *cannot*. Let him honeſtly tell Proteſtants ſo; and if they will venture Perſecution, and Schiſm, and Salvation on thoſe terms, the Fault is their own, and he has waſh'd his Hands: Otherwiſe, he deludes them ſhamefully. If they waver, and ſtand upon Security, they are *told*, they are *Abſolutely Certain*, and this *confirms* them; for it is as good Security as Heart can wiſh: But, when it comes to be ſifted, it appears they *may be deceiv'd* for all their Security; and their *Abſolutely-Certain* Religion proves to be ſuch as perhaps is *arrantly Falſe*. In ſhort, they have a bare Sound to rely upon for their Souls. Call their Security *Abſolutely Certain*, and 'tis good *Proteſtant Doctrin*; but call it *Infallible*, (which is the ſame) and 'tis rank *Popery*, and your Proteſtants will none of it. And ſo, they may if they will, and *muſt* if they will continue to be of your principles, be content with Sounds: But, if they will ſtand upon *Security from Deceit*, they muſt look for it where it is to be had: With all they can get here, it remains *They may be* Deceiv'd.

15. The ſecond-half of your Charge is purely your own Invention, and as pleaſant an Invention as ever roving

ving Fancy ſuggeſted. *Abſolute Certainty of Proteſtant Faith* was turn'd by Dr. *St.* to *Abſolute Certainty of Scripture.* Since then, Proteſtants believe *more* than that *Scripture* is *Scripture*, I ſaid, they were to prove their Abſolute Certainty of the *more* which they believ'd beſides. You have taken ſuch extraordinary pains to miſtake me, as plainly as I expreſt my ſelf, that you fancy *I would have them ſay they are thus certain* of thoſe Points which they *deny* to be in Scripture, and think them to be added by the Council of *Trent*, and which, therefore, they believe *not*. And theſe Points you underſtand to be the *more* of which I demanded Proof; and ſo by your power in *Reflection*, to deſire Proof of what they *do* believe, is to deſire Proof of what they *do not* believe: Abſolute Certainty of what *is* their Faith, is Abſolute Certainty of what *is not* their Faith; and their *not-Faith* is their *more-Faith*. Ridiculous Folly! To pretend we expected Proteſtants ſhould *prove to us* ſuch Points as they *deny'd*, and our ſelves *held*; whence they could need no Proof *to us*; and if they needed any to *others*, it was certainly *our* proper Duty, not *theirs*, to produce them. Many, when they are hard put to it, have wav'd the conſideration of Shame, but 'tis a ſad thing utterly to renounce Common Sence too. Yet, what is it you will not do? What abſurd pretences not lay hold of, rather than be brought to this odious and dangerous thing call'd *Proving*? You *reflect* out your Paragraph with the *H. Scripture*, the good men, who penn'd it, with the Primitive Church, and Primitive Creeds, and the Council of *Trent*, and this you call *Reflecting* on my Letter.

16. Yet you ſet a good face on't at parting, and tell us, *You decline no Proof that is incumbent on you*; as if it were not incumbent on you to prove what you ſay.

You

You add, That *we ſee by this time* —as if there were any thing to be *ſeen* in all your *Reflections*, but that they decline all Proof, and that with the moſt aukward ſhifts in the World; as, Becauſe the Council of *Trent* had made a Declaration concerning Grace, *p.* 3. Becauſe a Miniſter is as good a man as a Prieſt, *p.* 4. Becauſe the Infallibility and Authority of the Church of *Rome* might run a riſque, *p.* 5. Becauſe Catholicks and Proteſtants hit it not about Judgment of Diſcretion, *Ibid.* Becauſe Dr. *Tillotſon* is an Excellent man, *p.* 6. Becauſe we will not diſpenſe with the word [*Abſolute*] which was Dr. *Sy's*, but will needs take it in its natural ſenſe, and not admit of your *no-ſenſe* of it, *Ibid.* Theſe and many other ſuch weighty Reflections have been our chief entertainment; and yet your *ſcrupulous Modeſty* has the Confidence to ſay *you decline no Proof that is incumbent on you*, when you have *incumb'd* all the while, if that be the word, on nothing but throwing out Baits to draw us from your *incumbent Proof*, to other matters. You talk indeed of *Proof* at laſt; and that which you ſay of it, is, That you prove when you prove. Moreover, you blame me for deſiring Proof of two things more; whereof One is the very thing your ſelves have made the point to be prov'd, and the other I never deſir'd you to prove at all. With this ſtuff you face it out, that *You prove Scripture to be the Word of God*; which, if one ſhould put you to it, you cannot; and *every Article of your Faith by the Scripture* (common words, which every Heretick may and does uſe), when I have been all this while ſoliciting with all the earneſtneſs I can, to know which way you can prove *any* Article with Abſolute Certainty by Scripture; and you will not tell me, and I am ſure, cannot. Though you have the Confidence to ſay you *do it*, yet every body may perceive *you know you cannot*. For

P. 11.

Ibid.

your

your very next words are, *Thus we prove we have ſufficient Certainty of our whole Faith*; which is to ſay, You decline Dr. *St's Abſolute Certainty*, nor know of any way to prove more than *ſufficient Certainty*. And this ſufficient Certainty of yours may be *no-Certainty*: For there goes no more to make a thing *ſufficient*, than to make a man content with it. A Yard of Cloth will make a ſufficient Garment for him who is content to go half naked; and a Table without Meat is a ſufficient Meal for him who is contented to faſt. And ſo, as long as you can prevail with your Proteſtants to be content *without Certainty*, you can prove they have Certainty abundantly Sufficient, becauſe *no-Certainty* will *ſuffice*. Marry, if they will inſiſt upon having at leaſt this Sufficient Certainty which you promiſe, I know not how you will do without Weights and Scales to weigh out your Certainty, according to ſeveral mens Exigencies, and make down-weight Sufficient, except they will take your word; for you have no more to give them even for ſo much: But, for *Abſolute True Certainty*, the only Certainty of which Dr. *Stillingfleet* ſpake and I demanded Proof, They muſt abſolutely excuſe you. Poor Proteſtants, to be thus us'd! That *Empty Words* and *ſolemn Outſides*, and *Confident Noiſe*, ſhould be offer'd to them for Truth, and, which is more deplorable, *paſs upon them!* That they ſhould not yet perceive they are but the Stratagems of thoſe *no-principled* men, who impoſe on them, and ſecretly laugh at them for their Eaſineſs; and yet reflect not that they muſt anſwer one day with their ſouls, for ſuffering themſelves to be ſo impos'd upon.

17. From your *Proving* Talent you paſs to your *Anſwering* Talent; and will try to anſwer a Diſcourſe of mine, in which there are but * Five Propoſitions. The First, [*God has left us ſome way to know ſurely what Chriſt*

* See my firſt Letter, P. 30.

and

and his Apoſtles taught.] This you grant to be a *Certain Truth:* and ſo there is one ſtep of our Journey made. I think you grant the ſecond too, not that you poſitively ſay *I* or *No*; for that is too preciſe & dull a Method for a Man of your parts: But as *Plain Truth* ſeems always ridiculous to you; you laugh at it for a fooliſh Inference, becauſe 'tis ſo viſibly in the Antecedent. You are not aware I perceive, that your Raillery is Complement. To be contain'd in the Antecedent, which you make the *Fault*, is the *Praiſe* of an Inference; without which it would indeed be good for nothing, or rather not be at all. For which way can an Inference be *drawn* from an Antecedent, in which *it was not* to be drawn? Would you have us draw Wine out of an empty Cask, or Beer out of a Jarr of Oyl. Again, the more we know the thing *is where* we would draw it, the ſurer our Draught. But you ſeem to be ſo little acquainted with Antecedents & Inferences, that 'tis no wonder; by making them your ſport, you make your ſelf the ſport of thoſe who *do* underſtand them. In the mean time your laughing is owning that the Inference *is contain'd* in the Antecedent, and therefore *Certain*, as you before own'd the Antecedent was. And ſo we are another ſtep onwards; and might ſo forwards without ſtopping longer, if you could have let my Propoſition alone. But, you muſt needs be wording on't your own way, to ſhew that either you did not underſtand it, or that you had a mind to inform us how neatly and dexterouſly you could *change* and pervert words, as well as *Anſwer*. My Words were: *Therefore this way muſt be ſuch that they who take it,* **ſhall** *arrive by it at the End it was intended for; that is, know ſurely what* Chriſt *and his* Apoſtles *taught*. Your Words which you pretend equivalent to mine, are theſe: * [*If God has left us a Way to know, then by that Way we* **may** *know.*] Pray Sir, * P. 12.

do *You* take my *ſence*, or ſay what I do? Is **ſhall** *know* and **may** *know* all one? I ſay that they who take the Way left by God **ſhall**, that is, *cannot chuſe but know*; as he cannot chuſe but draw a *ſtraight Line*, who draws it by a *ſtraight Rule*; and he *cannot chuſe* but come to *London* who goes on the *Right Way* thither: If either could miſs, provided they *draw* by the *Rule*, and travel on in the *Road*; the *Rule* of the One is not *ſtraight*, nor the *Way* of the other *Right*. And, ſo, I make account that the *Way* to know the Faith of *Chriſt*, is not a *Right Way*, if thoſe who *take* it *can fail* to know their Faith; and therefore not the *Way* left by *God*. You barely ſay, *we* **may** *know* with which it conſiſts *we* **may not** *know*; and, ſo, you make us a Way in which they who travel may be always *out of the Way*; which is well enough for a Way of your making; but it is certainly no Way of *God's* making; for it is plainly *no Way*. But leaving this little tryal of your skill; that which you ſay to my Propoſition (unfalſifyed) if you ſay any thing is, that 'tis, indeed a little *too viſibly*, but yet *true*, and ſo we may go on.

18. You Preface to the Third Propoſition with asking, *who I diſpute againſt*? and *why if I would be thought to diſpute againſt you*, I do not uſe ſuch and ſuch *Terms*? Two very pleaſant Queſtions! Your own and my Title Page tell as many as ſee them that I am diſputing againſt *D.* of *Paul's*; and yet you ſtand enquiring after the ſecret again, to ask why I do not uſe *Terms* to your mind, is to ask why the Defendant does not go to the Plaintiff to draw his Anſwer. You ſhall excuſe me from being beholding to you, if you pleaſe; till you have a better knack at making Arguments, for *your ſelf*, you ſhall make none for *me*, by my conſent. But, where lyes the Quarrel? You do not ſure expect I ſhould write to your liking; and if you think I ſpeak not againſt you, and your party,

you.

you need not trouble your ſelf with what I ſay. What does not *touch* you, cannot *hurt* you; ſo you may ſay *concedo totum*, and reſt ſecure by being unconcern'd. Yet you ſpeak at laſt, and not till then, to purpoſe; when you bear the Reader in hand *I pack the Cards*, and you will *play fair*; 'tis *that* muſt carry the Cauſe, or nothing. To get the Readers Affection on his ſide much imports *him*, who has nothing but ſuch little Rhetorical tricks to truſt to. P. 13.

19. But, as if I had not the gift of Propheſy to foreſee with what a kind of Man I ſhould have to do, I happen'd to *propoſe* firſt what I intended to *prove*, before I went about to *prove* it, which I thought was the cleareſt way. You at a venture take what comes firſt, and tho' you ſaw it was my Concluſion which I inferr'd from the following Propoſition, will needs ſpeak to *it* before you ſpeak to the Premiſes. This has ſo blunder'd all things, that the Reader will not eaſily perceive what we are doing. I ſhall therefore, (as you ſhould have done) mind only the *Proof* here, and reſerve the *Inference* till we come to the place where I made it. I put then to be prov'd that [*Scripture's Letter interpretable by private Judgements is not that Way*] viz. *the Way left by* God; and for my proof that [*we experience* Presbyterians *and* Socinians, *for example, both take that Way* [of private Interpretation] viz. *and yet differ in ſuch high Fundamentals as the* Trinity *and* Godhead *of* Christ.]

20. You, before you anſwer, would have it thought you might *ridicule* me in *my own Language*. Never ſpare me, good Sir, nor balk your mirth for me if I give a juſt Occaſion: But where lies the Jeſt? Why, I quarrell'd with *Dr. St.* for bringing an inſtance, and now bring one my ſelf: If this be all, I ſhall be tempted to be merry in my turn. I told Dr. St. *he might undoubtedly have produc't his Inſtance if he had been arguing*, but minded him that My Firſt Letter, p. 10.

his turn was then to *Anſwer*, and that his *Inſtance* was not an *Anſwer*, but a *new Argument*. And yet this is not plain enough for you to ſee that I faulted not the *Inſtance*, but the unſeaſonable *Argument*, as I ſhould any other in ſuch circumſtances; and you would have it *ridiculous* in me who *am arguing* to do what I only excepted againſt, becauſe he *was not arguing*; and freely acknowledg'd he might do, if he had been to argue. Sure you were in a pleaſant humour, when you thought of turning me into *ridicule*, becauſe your ſelf underſtood not where the ſtreſs lay, tho' it were never ſo plainly told you. But to *let this paſs*, as you ſay, with your cauſeleſly gleeking Reflections upon Scripture and Tradition, what ſay you to the Proof I bring?

P. 15. 21. Why, *the force* of my *Argument* (ſay you) is this: *If any men can be found who wreſt or miſinterpret Scripture, then can it not be the Way to know what Chriſt and his Apoſtles taught.* One thing after another, if it pleaſe you. Talk of *the force of my Argument* as much as you will, but, e're you leave the Propoſition before you, of the *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*, 'tis but fair to *grant* or *deny* it. I muſt intreat you too to leave *tranſlating* my Arguments. They are *New* yet, and need *no mending*; when they do, I will be better ſatisfied of your Skill in the Trade, before I become your Cuſtomer. By your next words, rallying againſt the *Validity of the Conſequence*, I gueſs you grant the *Antecedent*; and ſo, that care being over, we have nothing but the Conſequence to mind. The Diſpute would fall in more properly under the next Propoſition which infers the Conſequent; but now I am here, I will hear what you ſay, before I paſs farther. You ſay then, That *indeed this Argument proves nothing, but that I have no good opinion of the Scripture.* Will this venomous Cant never be left? I think the Scripture too

good

good and too ſacred to be abus'd by *wrong* Interpretations, and labour to preſerve it from them: You labour to keep it expos'd to that Abuſe; Pray, which of us two have a better Opinion and more Reverence for the Scripture? You proceed: *Muſt a Rule be no good Rule, becauſe ſome who uſe it miſunderſtand it and abuſe it?* What may you mean by this? I take my Ruler, and draw a Line by it; Does the Straightneſs or Crookedneſs of this Line depend upon my *Underſtanding*? What is't then you call *Miſunderſtanding* a Rule? If you make the Letter of Scripture the Rule, and ſo private Interpreting the *Uſing* it, or drawing the Line, and the *Senſe* the Line drawn; unriddle to us, if you can, how the *Senſe* drawn from the *Letter* can any more fail to be *True*, than the *Line* drawn by the *Rule* to be *ſtraight*; and which way that Senſe can be *miſunderſtood*; and how the Rule can be a good Rule if it be us'd, and the Senſe to which it is a Rule *be* miſunderſtood? Or, do you mean perhaps that 'tis with the Scripture as with a Grammar-Rule; where he who underſtands not what 'tis for a Nominative Caſe and a Verb to agree, may make falſe Conſtruction, and yet the Rule be a good Rule. Tho' you ſhould go thither for your Notion of a Rule, we ſhould be but where we were. For, as the *Grammar-Rule*, let it be never ſo ill underſtood, will make *good Conſtruction* in caſe it be *us'd*; ſo the *Scripture-Rule*, if it be, as you put it, *us'd*, muſt needs produce *right ſenſe*. But the truth is, a Grammar-Rule is not a Rule till it be *underſtood*; for he who underſtands not what 'tis for Caſes and Verbs to agree, has *no Rule* to make them agree: And, then, if you will make the Letter of Scripture ſuch a Rule, you will make the Letter firſt underſtood to be the Rule of underſtanding it, and people miſunderſtand what they underſtand, and the miſunderſtood Rule be a Rule, which is only a

Rule by being understood. In short, turn it which way you will, you will (to borrow an Expression) *be much beholden to the Reader to make* Sense *of what you say.*

P. 15. 22. You question on; *Must a Way be a wrong Way, because some that take it will not keep it?* Riddle my Riddle again. Pray, who *are* or *can be* those *some* who *take* it and will not *keep* it? As long as they *take* it, they *keep* it, I think; and they keep it not against their Wills sure. He who has no Will to keep it, may when he pleases *go out* of it, but then he does no longer take it, and is none of the *some* of whom the Question speaks, (for they *all* take it) and so we have nothing to do with him. When all is done, the *Will* here is to no more purpose than the *Understanding* before: For he who *takes* the Way, shall certainly arrive at his Journeys end, let him *Will* what he pleases, and the Way must needs be a wrong way if he do not. 'Tis great pity you are not in the right; You would save more men than the *Benefit of their Clergy*: For the Thief in a Cart, upon the Way to *Tyburn*, would never come there if *willing* not to keep that Way would keep him from it. But by affirming that some *take* the Way who yet will not *keep* it, you affirm that some *do* and *do not Take* it. And so Dr. *St.* is well holp up with a Reflecter, who imagins we are talking of one, who only *takes* the Way at first, and afterwards *leaves* it; whereas 'tis plain, the Argument proceeds of such as make the Way their Choice, and persist to follow no other to their lifes End.

Ibid. 23. Lastly, You tell us, that *Till it be prov'd God has left such a Way or Rule, as no man can possibly err out of it, mistake it, or abuse it*, &c. For you must permit me to stop by the way, I am too short breath'd to run over the long period at a loose. But, let you alone to make all sure: You are safe enough if all must go on your side,

till

till ſome body prove to you that no man *can* err out of the Way left by God, miſtake or abuſe it; that is, till ſome body prove that *Ways* are *Priſons* out of which there is no eſcaping; or that the man cannot poſſibly fall into *Errour* who is out of the Way to *Truth*. As many as leave the Catholick Church, leave the Way left by God; and you, like a right pleaſant man, would have it prov'd, that the thing cannot poſſibly be done which we ſee is done by millions; and would have us, who ſay, they all *do err* and *miſtake*, prove they *cannot*. All this while I a little ſuſpect you *mean* otherwiſe than you *ſay*; and that by your words, *Errour*, and *Miſtake*, and *Abuſe* of the Way, you underſtand miſſing the *End* of the *Way*, *Truth*. But let us ſee what you will make of it: What would you have *prov'd* next? Why *That it is not enough that God has left us ſuch a Way or Rule, as men may underſtand and obſerve if they be not wanting to themſelves*. What do you call *being wanting to themſelves*? I underſtand how a man that *will not* travel, or *leaves* a *right* and *takes* a *wrong way*, is *wanting to himſelf*: but he who puts himſelf upon the Way, continues on in it, and changes not his Road, is not wanting to himſelf in any thing I can imagin, which belongs to the *Way*: And the way of this Traveller I maintain againſt you, has not enough to be a *Way*, if it barely *may*, and yet *may not*, bring him to his Journeys End. What will this come to at laſt? Why, till theſe things be prov'd, *It will not follow, that the Scripture's Letter, in the ſenſe you have own'd it, is not the Way, tho' not only* Presbyterians *and* Socinians, *but the greater number of Mankind ſhould own it, and yet differ about Fundamental Points contain'd in it*. What you call the *Senſe* which you own of the Letter of Scripture, will come by and by. But will not that *follow* which you ſay here *will not*? Will it not follow, that the *Way* by which

which a man that goes in it comes to *Errour*, is not the Way to *Truth*? Will it not follow, that he who at his Journey's End finds himſelf at *York*, did not go the Way to *London*? Pray, what's the Way to a Place? Is it not that Paſſage that he who has paſt it, finds himſelf at that Place? And ſo the Way to know the Doctrin of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, is it not the Means which he who has us'd knows that Doctrin? Why then, ſince *Presbyterians* and *Socinians* both interpret by their private Judgments, and one ſide *knows not* the Doctrin of Chriſt, it follows as unavoidably, that the *Way* of private Interpretation is no ſure way to know it, as that he who has gone through the *Strand*, and finds himſelf at *Charing Croſs*, has not gone the way to *Moorfields*; That is, as certainly as that *a Way is a Way* or Means to bring a man to ſuch a Place.

24. What do you talk then of *erring* for, and *miſtaking* and *abuſing* the *Way*? Or what do you mean? 'Tis true, thoſe erring men do miſtake the *true* Way, and for that reaſon *err*. But they miſtake not the Way which you ſay is the *true* Way. They do interpret by their private Judgment, and ſo *take*, not *miſtake* it; *uſe*, not *abuſe* it. Sure you mean that they miſtake the Doctrin of Chriſt; and, ſo, by miſtaking the *Way*, you very *wiſely* underſtand miſtaking the *End*. And then, what a man are you to contend their way is a *Way*, and a *ſure Way* too, to bring them to the Knowledge of Chriſt's Doctrin, when they purſue it and are not brought to that Knowledge? And what Eyes have you who perceive not that therefore it cannot be a *ſure* way? Again, to what purpoſe do you tell us that men *may* underſtand and *obſerve* (as if *Obſerving* concern'd our Queſtion of *Knowing*) if they be *not wanting to themſelves*? when they who take a *right* Way, not only *may*, but *muſt*, and cannot poſſibly fail of coming whither it leads, any more than the man who

who goes down the *Strand*, of coming to *Charing-Cross*; and when men have no more to do with a Way, but to travel *in it*; and ſo cannot be *wanting to themſelves*, in that reſpect if they *do*. Of the ſame batch is your *miſunderſtanding* and *not keeping* the Way. As if they who interpret by their private Judgments did *not keep* the way of interpreting by private Judgments. And tho' their Underſtandings be none of the beſt when they take that for the *ſure Way* to underſtand by, yet that very miſunderſtanding is their underſtanding it to be the *Way*; and ſo they, even in your opinion, miſunderſtand not the *Way*, however they miſunderſtand *by it*. In fine, you amuſe us with a company of *Words*, which have a *Sound*; but either no *ſenſe* at all, or none to purpoſe: And it remains, that, becauſe a *Way* muſt bring every one that *takes* it to the *End* of that Way; and private Interpretation does not bring *Socinians* to the *ſure Knowledge of Chriſts Doctrine*, which is the *End*; that, therefore Private Interpretation of Scripture *is not* a way to know that Doctrine *ſurely*.

25. And yet you can bear us in hand that this follows *no more* than it follows that becauſe we *ſee men miſinterpret and break good Laws daily, therefore thoſe Laws are Unintelligible, or cannot be kept, and muſt be thought inſufficient to ſhew them what the Law-giver expects from them*. What *breaking* and *keeping* the Laws is brought in for, you beſt know that bring them in. Our Diſcourſe is only about *knowing* the Doctrin of Faith, and not at all about *Living* up to it, and ſo has nothing to do with thoſe who *know*, but will *not keep* the Laws, as is the caſe of moſt Malefactors. But you end your Diſcourſe well I muſt needs ſay, and very ſuitably to all the reſt, with an Inſtance directly againſt your ſelf. You ſee that Laws left to *Private Interpretation* are, by all *P.* 16.

Mankind, judg'd *insufficient*, and *publick* Interpreters therefore set up every where; and, from the Parity with them which *are* Insufficient, you conclude the Letter of Scripture *is not* Insufficient. Any body but your self would have made another Use of this Instance. As *God* can write much plainer than Men, when he thinks fit, and has more care of their Salvation than they of their Temporal Concerns; another man would have concluded that *God* did not intend their Salvation should depend on the privately-interpretable Letter of the Divine Law, which he left less plain than Men made the Letter of Humane Laws. But you, it seems, had a mind to make your Discourse all of a piece. The best is, 'tis now ended, & we are free to passon to the fourth Proposition. To which, because the force of Exceptions against an Inference before it be inferr'd appears not so well, I reserve what you say against it, while I put it only to be prov'd.

26. It is this, *Therefore Scripture's Letter interpretable by private Judgments is not the way left by* God *to know surely what* Christ *and his* Apostles *taught, or surely to arrive at right Faith.* And now I must look to my self, for you pour out here your distinguishing Talent upon me. If, say you, *by Scripture's Letter, he means unsensed Characters, then I confess Scriptures Letter cannot be the Rule or Way.* P. 13. There is one branch of your Distinction; and so the other, unless you will talk non-sense, must needs be, *Scripture's Letter*, meaning *sensed* Characters, *can be* or *is* the Rule. Your words are, *Yet if he can think it reasonable to allow as much to the* Scripture *as he expects we should allow to this Letter of his, that it contains good sence expresst in words significant and intelligible, we deny his Assumption that Scripture's Letter is not this way.* As you have this Art, among the rest, to talk unintelligibly

gibly, when you have a mind to't, in very plain English, I wish some Body would tell me for you, whether you take *Scripture*'s *Letter* in this period for *unsensed* or *sensed* Characters; for truly I cannot tell my self. By the terms you put [*intelligible*] and [*significant*] one would guess you mean *unsensed Characters*; for [*intelligible*] imports what *may* be understood, but *is not yet*; and [*significant*] what *may be* perceived by the sign, whether it *be* or *no*. And then you have made a fair hand of it with your *fair dealing*, who distinguish the word [*Letter*] into Characters unsensed and Characters *unsensed*; and grant it to be a Rule in *one* of the *two same* meanings, and deny it in the *other*. But you shall talk sense for me, and mean Characters *sensed*; and then lets see how much you have mended the matter. A Character *sensed* signifies a Character with the *sense* joined to it: The *sense* of the Characters of *Scripture* is the sense of *God*, and the sense of *God* is that which we are to *believe*. And, so, Scripture-Characters *sensed*, signify *Faith* it self in conjunction with those Characters. Now *Faith* is the *End* to which we are looking for a *Way* to carry us. To tell us then that *Scripture*'s *Letters* taken for *sensed* Characters is this *way*, is to tell us that the *end* is the *way to it self*; that the means to *get* Faith is to *have* it first; that, when we know it, we know it; that, when we are at our Journey's *End*, we are in the direct *Road to it*, and such fine things, which would tempt a man not very fond of disputing, to leave it off and betake himself to some other business: For how can you or any think fit to vex poor controversy all your life, when your very sense proves Nonsense? And yet it is not that you have not serv'd a Prentiship long enough in the Mystery: But the best Shoemaker in the world cannot make a good shoe of Bad Leather.

27. Yet, as you are not a man to be discourag'd with

ill ſucceſs, you are at your Diſtinctions again, and tell us that, *if by theſe words*, interpretable by private Judg-
Ibid. ments, *I mean the* Scripture *any way interpretable, as any private man may poſſibly wreſt the words to make them comply with his own ſentiments, or through* Igno-rance, *and Laxineſs, and* Neglect of *ſuch Helps and* Means *as are fit to be us'd, may* miſunderſtand *them, I muſt* have a very bad *Conſcience*, &c. As if the Queſtion were about my Conſcience. But you would ſay, I ſup-poſe that Scripture, ſo meant, is not the Way, and I ſay it is not *too*. Pray, what Conſcience is yours, if mine be bad when I ſay as you do? P. 14. *But if* my *meaning be, that* Scripture *as it may be underſtood by a Private Man of a competent Judgment, uſing ſuch Helps as are proper, is not the Way*, you *again deny* my *Aſſumption*. Becauſe it would render the Diſcourſe unintelligibly confus'd to re-peat ſo many lines at every turn, I ſhall, with your good leave, ſay in ſhort, *Good* and *Bad* Judgments, under-ſtanding by the *Bad* all the qualifications of the Firſt Branch, and all of your ſecond by the *Good*. I take you then to ſay that *Scripture's Letter*, as interpretable by *Bad* Judgments *is not* the Way; but, as Interpretable by *Good* Judgments is the Way. By this account three parts in four of Mankind at a modeſt computation, have *no WWay*. For ſo many *Bad* Judgments there are at leaſt. But, the main Point is, while we are enquiring which the *Way* is which *God has left*, pray what have we to do with the *Judgments of* men? Can they *make* or *unmake* it? Or does it depend on them to be or not be the Way he left, as they happen to be different? It is a *WWay* only ſo long as good Judgments travel in it, and ceaſes to be a *WWay* aſſoon as Bad Judgments come upon it. A Way, I think, is a *WWay* whether it be beaten by the Luſty or the Lame, the Pur-blind or the Well-ſighted. And, ſo if

the Letter of Scripture, interpretable by Private Judgments, *be* the Way which God has left us, 'tis not the Goodneſs or Badneſs of Private Judgments which can make it *not* the Way. Wherefore, tho' you have chopt upon a Diſtinction for which we are beholden to you, for we might chance elſe not to have minded there are Good and Bad Judgments in the World; Yet your Diſtinction unluckily has no relation at all to the queſtion. Nevertheleſs, it ſerves for *Talk* and *Show*, and bids fair to draw us from thinking what 'tis we are about, to wrangling about how much Brains go to a *Competent Judgment*, how much *Pains* to *Diligence*, and ſuch very uſeful Diſputes; which, if you had any, was in likelihood your Deſign. For ſure you cannot but ſee your ſelf, that your Diſtinction is no more to our purpoſe than News from *Hungary* or the *Morea*.

28. Again, your Firſt Branch ſays that *Bad* Judgments *may* miſunderſtand the Letter of Scripture, and that it is not the Way to ſuch; which I think is to ſay, that it is not the Way for that reaſon; for you do not, and I ſuppoſe, will not ſay that they may not underſtand it right, if luck ſerve, let them be never ſo *Bad*; but, becauſe they *may* miſunderſtand it, therefore it is not the Way. Why then the very reaſon you give why it is not the Way in your Firſt branch, bars you from making it a Way in your Second. For all you ſay of your *competent* and *aſſiſted* Judgment, is, that they *may* underſtand it *right*; which is not denying, if it be not owning, they *may* likewiſe underſtand it *wrong*. And then, you may unriddle to us when you can, how the *Bad* Judgment, which *may* miſunderſtand it, makes it *no Way*, and the *Good* makes it a Way, which *may* miſunderſtand it *too*. You are ſtrangely partial to *Good Judgments*, to make the Poſſibility to miſunderſtand Scripture's

tune's Letter exclude the Bad and admit the Good; and the Possibility to understand it right, include the Good and shut out the Bad. Thus men *have*, or *have not* a Way as they find favour with you, and as you like their Judgments. As far as I see, your Favour is all in all. For, since you make the Letter of Scripture a Way to Good, but not to Bad Judgments, there is no knowing when it *is* and when it *is not* the Way, till we know which must pass for Good, and which for Bad Judgments: and so nothing can come of it till we have a Test to try them. Now, I am much afraid that *your own* Judgment is, like *Bayes* his Play, your *only Test*; and that you make account all goes right as long as People think as you do. Marry, if they chance to deviate from you, they lose their *Judgments*, or their *Diligence*, or their *Proper Helps*, or something, and stop up their way with their own Faults. There is no doing here without Scales again to weigh out the Brains which go to a *Competent Judgment*, the *Pains* which go to *Diligence*, and the rest. Otherwise, we have lost Scripture; and, for our Comfort, get *your Word* instead of it. For, if Scripture interpretable by a Competent Judgment be our Way, and yours be a Competent Judgment (which no doubt you suppose as your First Principle) 'tis a plain Case that *Your Judgment is our Way*; which in truth is the Sum of all. So long as we will believe as you would have us, we shall have the most magnificent words in the world, for our Souls. We shall all have *Competent Judgments* from *Nature*, and *Proper Helps* from *Grace*. We shall (as many as will stand upon't) have *Absolute Certainty*, only infinitely greater Certainty than Reason can afford, the Word of God. But, all is to be understood with the condition annext of trusting You for all. Otherwise we have neither *Diligence*, nor *Judgment*, nor *Helps*, nor

Cer-

Certainty, nor *Word of God*, nor any thing in the world but *Your* Word; who yet cannot for your life make any three words you ſay hang handſomely together.

29. But I have ſtray'd after your Will-of-the-Wiſp till I have almoſt loſt ſight of our Point. The Queſtion is, *Whether Scripture's Letter Interpretable by private Judgments* be *the Way left by God*. I maintain it is not; and prove it, becauſe men who take that way *err*. For, I thought it needed no proving, that *the Way left by God* is not *the Way to Errour*. You diſtinguiſh twice; Firſt the *Letter* into *Senſed* and *Unſenſed* Characters; that is, if you make there any Diſtinction at all. Now the Propoſition is of the Letter *Interpretable*, that is, *not yet Interpreted*, or which has not yet the Senſe put to it, and ſo is yet *unſenſed*. When you then diſtinguiſh the *Letter Interpretable*, into *Senſed* and *Unſenſed*, you make a Diſtinction, whereof one branch is not comprehended in the Notion to be divided. 'Tis juſt the ſame as to diſtinguiſh *Learned Men* into *Learned* and *Unlearned*; or *Men* into *Negroes* and *Horſes*. Your Second Diſtinction is, of *Judgments*, into *Competent* and *Incompetent*, which is Twin to the former. I vouch't for Proof the *Presbyterians* and *Socinians*; men of very *Competent* Judgments; and who are neither *ignorant*, nor *lazy*, nor *negligent*, nor baulk any *means* or *helps*, which they judge can enable them to underſtand the Letter, or that you have, except that, for a *Spiritual Guide* (which, I ſuppoſe, is one of the *Helps*) they in likelihood uſe the Aſſiſtance of ſome body of their own, not of Your Perſwaſion. But if one of your Proteſtant Guides be a *proper* help to your Proteſtant, a *Socinian* ſure is proper to a *Socinian*. In ſhort, they fall under none of your ill Qualifications, and when I ſpeak of *Competent* and *Qualify'd* Judgments, you diſtinguiſh the *Compet*[illegible] into ſome which *are* Com-

petent,

petent, and some which *are not* Competent; and, again, the *Qualify'd*; into those which *are*, and those which *are not Qualify'd*. The sum is this, I ask whether the *Unsensed* Letter be the *Way*; and you answer, the *Sensed* Letter is; that is, the *End* is part of the *way* to the End. I propose you *Competent Judgments*, and ask if the Letter be a Way to *Them*, and you reply, it is not a way to the *Incompetent*. And so you, who, good squeamish Gentleman, fall into a Scruple at the very name of *Cards*, can play at *Cross-purposes* all along very freely, even when Souls are at Stake. I desire you to remember that I speak of a Way, which they who *take*, *shall*, and that *surely*, arrive at Christ's Faith. You talk of a *way* by which men so and so qualify'd, *may* arrive at it. As if *may be* were any thing to *shall* and *must be*; or the qualifications of Travellers any thing to the *way*. I * foretold I should have nothing but an unconcerning Return for an Answer: And you have made me, tho' against my will, prophesie; not bating so much of my Prediction as the *scornful Jest*. For there is the *Mountain* and the *Mouse*, and *Reading a Lecture in Logick* to verifie it.

* My First Letter, P. 31.

30. You conclude with an Argument against my Conclusion: *You*, I say, who are *Answering*, and have nothing to do with *Arguing*. But, what would we have? Men who are uneasie will alwaies be shifting places. All our earnest Sollicitations could not wring one Argument out of you when it was your turn to *prove*; and now 'tis your turn to *Answer*, you thrust your Arguments upon us unbidden. Nor is there any keeping you from falling into the same Fault with your *Suppositions*, that Dr. *St.* did with his *Instance*. You *suppose* then 1. *That the Scripture is God's Word.* And so do I too, provided you mean the true Sense of it. For a false Sense, whatever you think, is, in my Judgment, *not God's Word.*

2. That

2. *That it was written to be understood.* Undoubtedly; but not by every one, barely by means of the Letter. All Books are written to be understood: Grammar, for Children to understand Construction; Mathematical Books for those who will understand Mathematicks; and yet those Books without Masters will make but few Grammarians or Mathematicians. 3. *That it is written for the Instruction of Private Men.* Yes, but not for the only, or sufficient means of their Instruction, barely by the Letter. 4. *That they are concern'd to understand it.* Yes again; and as much concern'd not to *misunderstand* it. 5. *That they may believe and live as it directs.* They not onely *may*, but *ought*. But, pray remember, that *It* directs no *believing* or *living* according to a *false sense*. 6. *That they have means left them of God for the Understanding of it, so far as it is of necessary concernment to them.* Yes, and that *Absolutely Certain Means*, the publick Interpretation of the Church or *Tradition*. 7. *And that*, using *those Means as they ought they may understand it.* Never mince it with *may*; they *shall* and certainly shall understand it who use those means. From all you conclude at last. *And thus it is to them the way to know surely what* Christ *and his* Apostles *taught as necessary to their salvation.* How! The way to those who use those Means! Why this is just as I say. But what becomes of those who use not those Means? 'Twas ill forgot when your Hand was in at *supposing*, not to *suppose* in amongst the rest, that *Private Interpretation* is the Means left by *God* for understanding Scripture. For, if *publick Interpretation* be those Means, as it needs must, since I have prov'd that *Private* is not; the Scripture plainly is *no Way* to those who only rely on the *Private* Means to understand it. And your *Protestants* are much beholding to your Argument which shews that Scripture, inter-

preted, as *they* interpret it, by *private Judgment*, is no Way to *them*. And I were very unreasonable if I should take offence at your Challenge, which bids me *shew, when I can, that your Suppositions are Unreasonable or False*. Not I, believe me; For I should be very cross-natur'd to fall out with a man who takes my part.

* P. 12. 31. Thus you have *try'd* * as you call it, to answer my Argument; and have succeeded (even in your own Judgment, I guess) very sorrily. For had you been Confident of your performance against it as it is, you would never have thought of *changing* it, as you do here *p.* 17. Men who have put by a Thrust are not sollicitous to instruct their Adversary how he *should have* Thrust. And yet you will needs be teaching me, how I should have done *to have made sure work*; that is, to have been sure to hit your Buckler. I mean not to lose time on your Argument. It were ridiculous for me to amuse my self with what never *was* nor *will* be said by any but your self. No body else would have left out the principal Consideration, *using the Rule*, and, so, coming to Right Faith by *using* it. As if a *Rule* would make a *Line* of it self, tho' no body draw by it: And a *Way* bring to the Journeys *End*, even those who travel *not* in it. In a word, your Argument has all the faults of your Answer in short; and onely shews you can speak from the purpose more solemnly and methodically, by way of Syllogism.

32. After you had thus nobly acquitted your self in answering my short Discourse, you proceed in the same Method to answer Mr. *G*'s Argument for the Infallibility of the Catholick Church. Which, e're I come to examin, I must first say something to your Preliminaries.

33. You doubt whether I think *it needs any Proof that the Church of* Rome *is Infallible*. To those who reflect on

on the force of a vast Human Testimony, attesting notorious *matter of Fact*, and what Assent it claims from Human Nature in parallel occasions, I do indeed judge it does not so much need *Proof* as *Reflection*. But, why should I think it needs no Proof against *You*, who, we see plainly, have *interpreted* your selves out of your Natural Sentiments? Your reason, Sir, because I say, *'Tis in vain to talk against one Infallibility, without setting up another*. Now it * has been demonstrated to you, and never yet answered, That *Infallibility* and *Certainty* are the same; and Nature tells us, that *All Discourse supposes something Certain*, otherwise it may run on *endlessly*, and so nothing can ever come to be *concluded*. How is it possible then to *discourse* against Infallibility, or any thing else, without *setting up* and proceeding upon something that is *Certain*, or Infallibly true? By your constant jesting whenever Infallibility comes in the way, you discover your anger against it, because you know you can produce nothing that is truly *Certain*, to ground your Faith. Notwithstanding the vulgar use to say commonly, [*I am infallibly Certain of such a thing*] yet none laughs at them or thinks them extravagant. And must we be afraid to use the same Language in our Controversie, because your *Ears* are so *tender*, or rather your *Grounds* so *soft*, they cannot bear it? If you will needs declare against *Infallible Certainty*, be but so candid as to say that you are *Fallibly Certain*, and see how your Readers will smile at your Folly! And yet you ought to own one or the other, if you be Certain at all; for there can be no *Third* or *Middle* sort of Certainty, which is neither *Fallible* or *Infallible*. Pray speak to this Point, and let's have a little Reason from you at least, and not perpetual Rambling and Shuffling. How can you justifie your selves, that you are not *Deserters of Human Nature*,

P. 17.

* Faith Vindicated, P. 37. 38.

ture, by *affirming* (or at least *supposing*) there is no *Infallibility* (that is, *True Certainty*) *to be found amongst Men*; *Betrayers of Christian Faith*, while you leave it all capable to be a Lye; nay, maintain the full Sense of that wicked Position [*All Christian Faith is possible to be False*] in Discourses directly fram'd for that set purpose! *Blasphemers of God's Providence*, in declaring and asserting that he has left *less* Certain Grounds for *Faith*, and consequently for the Salvation of Mankind, for which the World was created, and *God* himself *dy'd*, than he has for other things of a trifling importance! Will it expiate for those Crimes, to talk cantingly here of an *Infallible and Living God*, and *his giving us His Word by Men endu'd with an Infallible Spirit*; Sayings fit to take the good Women that are much pleas'd with Godly Talk in a Sermon, but frivolous in our Controversie? Who ever question'd that God was *Living* or *Infallible*; or that *he has left us an Infallible Word*? The only question is, whether you can settle for *others*, or have your *self*, any *Absolutely Certain* way to know the *sence* of that *Word* which this Infallible God has left us. You *tell* us indeed *'tis plainly written*: but that's the Question still, and the Point we deny; and for which we are continually demanding your *Proof*, and such a one as may confute our daily Experience, assuring us, that 'tis *not plain* to *Private Judgments*. Yet this only important Point, you only *name*, then slide over it and retreat to your old refuge, that weak insignificant pretence of *Sufficient Certainty*, (by which, I suppose, you mean a Certainty that is neither *Infallible* nor *Fallible*) and tell your People, if they will take your word against their own experience, the *Plainness* of it (for 'tis that must give them this Security) *secures* them from *being dangerously deceiv'd*; then, as 'tis but fitting, follow again of course

P. 18.

[*in*

[*the things necessary to Salvation*] and [*using the Proper helps*] which (as we shall see anon) will cost one's life to peruse; and this you tell us, *encourages them to take pains to be well assur'd of the Truth.* Fine words, I must confess, if they had any Sense! Is it such a rare Encouragement to take pains *to be well assur'd* their Faith is *True*, when you tell them, that after all their pains they can never be satisfied, but it *may be False*; that is, they can never be satisfy'd that it *is* **True**? But, when all's done, and the Certainty of your Grounds fail you, your last refuge is, that *the same Infallible God who has given the Means, has assur'd his Blessing to them that diligently use them.* But this begs the Question: For, if the Rule you follow be not the Means ordain'd by God to arrive at Faith, you have neither the right *Means*, nor can you be assur'd of any *Blessing* by using them; unless you can prove God has promis'd his Assistance to those that use not the *Means* he appointed; or will certainly *direct* those to the *right Place* who take the *wrong Way* to it. Next, you fall into a *Wonderment* to *hear me talk of mens being discourag'd — for want of an Infallible Guide.* And I wonder you should *hear me talk* what I never *spoke.* Not one Syllable was there of a *Guide*: All my Discourse was about an Infallible *Rule.* But the Truth is, you are sick of any Discourse that sifts the Uncertainty of your *Rule*; and therefore car'd not what new pretence you started, nor whether it were a False or True one, so you could but get the Dispute transferr'd to another subject. Yet, upon this false pretence you run on with your Raillery to the end of the Section.

34. But, *at last you have found Infallibility in Tradition, after you have been sent from place to place to seek it.* Pray, Sir, who sent you? We, with whom you are discoursing, never directed you to any other, but to that of *Tradition*: P. 18.

and

end you know well, and every Reader sees, we are treating of no Infallibility, but only *that*. Yet you triumph mightily, you have *found* a thing which was proffer'd to you *unsought*: and found *it at last*, which was both propos'd to you and urg'd upon you *at first*. What an everlasting Trifler are you, to confess to your Reader you have been running after Butterflies all this while, and could not once turn your Eye to the Question which was just before you, nay prest upon you! Well, but what are my * words? [*The Certainty of Scripture is from Tradition.*] Do you deny this? No, you positively assert it, *First Letter, p. 7.* Let's proceed. [*Therefore there is no refusing to admit, that Tradition causes Certainty.*] Do you deny this? How can you without destroying the Certainty of your own Rule [*Scripture*] which depends upon it, and withal contradicting your self? I added, [*And makes Faith as Certain as Scripture.*] Can you deny this? That is, will you affirm the same Virtue does not work the same Effect if the matter be capable? Let's see now how you answer. *Yet it may be this Certainty comes not up to Infallibility.* Yes, it does; for the Certainty here spoken of was *Absolute Certainty*, as was twice insisted on immediately before, from your own words, p. 6. and I * *prov'd* it was the same with *Infallibility* which you have never *disprov'd*; and so, unless you give a better Answer, your own Acknowledgment that Tradition causes *Absolute Certainty*, forces you to grant we are *Infallibly Certain* of our Faith. But say * you, *The* Tradition for Scripture was *more Universal*: Suppose it so, was not Tradition for *Doctrin* large *enough* to cause *Absolute Certainty!* Or, are not ten millions of Attesters as able to cause Absolute Certainty as Twenty? Pray, consider a little the Vertue of *Witnessing Authority*, and the force it has upon Human Nature. When the Num-

*My First Letter, P. 7.

*P. 23.

* P. 19.

ber

ber comes to that pitch, that it is ſeen to be impoſſible they ſhould all be *deceiv'd* in the thing they unanimouſly atteſt, or *conſpire* to *deceive* us, their Teſtimony has its full Effect upon us, and begets in us that firm and unalterable Aſſent we call *Abſolute Certainty*; and the Addition of myriads more adds nothing to the *ſubſtance* of that Aſſent, ſince it was wrought without it. But the main is, you quite miſunderſtand the nature of a long Succeſſive Teſtimony. Let ten thouſand men witneſs what *two* or *three*, who were the Original Atteſtors of a thing, ſaid *at firſt*, and twenty thouſand more witneſs in the *next Age* what thoſe ten thouſand told them, and ſo forwards, yet (taking them preciſely as *Witneſſes*) they amount to no more, in order to prove the *Truth* of that thing, than the Credit of thoſe *two* or *three* **Firſt Witneſſes** goes. 'Tis the *Firſt Source* of a Teſtimony, which gives the ſucceeding ones all their weight to prove the Thing that is witneſt to be *True*: 'Tis that from which the *Largeneſs* and *Firmneſs* of a Teſtimony, brought to evince the *Truth* of any thing, is to be meaſured or calculated. Since then the ſtream of Tradition for Doctrin had for its Source innumerable Multitudes of thoſe Chriſtians in the Firſt Age, in many places of the World, who heard the Apoſtles preach it, and ſaw them ſettle the Practice of it in the reſpective Churches; but the Original Teſtifiers that ſuch a *Book* was writ by ſuch or ſuch an Apoſtle or Evangeliſt, were *very few* in compariſon, ſometimes perhaps not paſt *two* or *three*: It cannot with any ſhew of Senſe be pretended, that the Tradition for the ſeveral *Books of Scripture* is in any degree comparable in either regard to the Tradition for *Doctrin*. Your next Anſwer is, that *This Univerſal Tradition is no more but Human Teſtimony, and that can be no ground for Infallibility which excludes all poſſibility of Errour.* Pray P. 19.

why

why not! If things were so order'd (as indeed they are, that the Testifiers *could* neither be *deceiv'd* in the Doctrin, being bred and brought up to it; nor *conspire to deceive* us, in telling the World in any Age that the new Doctrin they had invented was immediately delivered; then it was not possible any Errour could come in, under the notion of a Doctrin delivered from the beginning. But is not your Tradition for Scripture *Human Testimony* too? And if that can be erroneous, may not all Christian Faith by your Principles be perhaps a company of Lying Stories? You must be forc'd by your own words here to confess it; but I dare say, your Parishioners, should you openly avow it, would hate you for the Blasphemy. You would tell them, I doubt not, as you do us, that *Moral Certainty is enough to stand on such a Foundation:* that is, such a Certainty as may *deceive you*, and, by a neceffary consequence, may haste to overturn the whole Fabrick of Christian Faith. In the mean time let's see how manifestly you contradict Dr. *St.* when you should *defend* him. He avow'd * *Absolute Certainty* for the Book of *Scripture*, and this upon the Foundation of *Tradition*; and you tell us here *Tradition* can ground but *Moral Certainty:* Now all the World, till you writ, counterdistinguisht *Absolute* and *Moral Certainty*, which you jumble in one. But distinct they ever were, are, and shall be; for the Word [*Moral*] signifies a Diminution or Imperfection of Certainty, and [*Absolute*] plainly expresses the Perfection of it: whence 'tis Evident, that either you contradict Dr. *St.* (perhaps not without his private Order) or he himself. We shall have all words shortly lose their signification, for no other reason, but to give you room to shift this way and that, when you are too close prest with Reason.

* First Letter, P. 7.

35. Now, since Dr. *St.* had granted, that Tradition is

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Absolutely Certain for *Scripture*, and I had prov'd that *Absolute Certainty* was the same with *Infallibility*, what should hinder me from inferring, *that unless some special difficulty be found in other things that light into the same channel, it must bring them down infallibly too?* Your Gifts of Interpretation expounds these Words of mine thus: *These other things are things unwritten in that Holy Book.* I do assure you, Sir, you are mightily mistaken. I never told you yet that all Faith was not contain'd in Scripture *explicitly* or *implicitly*. What I meant was, that *the whole Body of* Christs *Doctrin*; (and not only that such a *Book* was *Scripture*,) nay the self-same Doctrin of *Faith* that is contain'd in *Scripture*, comes down by *Tradition*, or the Churche's Testimony. But with this Difference, (as to the *Manner* of it,) among others, that the *Church* that testifies it, having the sense of it in her Breast, can explain her meaning so as to put it out of all Question to Learners, Doubters and Enquirers; which the *Scripture* cannot. Whence we need not *fish for our Faith in the channel of Tyber*, as your great Wit tells us; St. *Peter's* Ship, (the Church) that caught so many Fishes at first, (the Body of Primitive Christians, who were the first deliverers of *Christ's* Doctrin,) hath stor'd up provision enough for the succession of Faith to the Worlds end. There we find it to our Hands. 'Tis your sober *Enquirers* who *Fish* for it among dead unsensed Characters, and in the Lake of *Geneva*; from whence to save the labour of going thither, you and your Friends are deriving a great *Channel* to run into *Thames*, over-swell it's Banks, and drown all the Churches. *Lacus Lemanus* is your *Tyber*, *Geneva* your *Rome*, and *John Calvin* (the Prime of your new *Apostles*) your St. *Peter*.

My First Let. p. 21.

P. 21.

36. All this is but prelude: But, now comes Mr. *G's* Argument, and therefore we are to expect now, how-

ever you but *trifled* hitherto, more pertinent & close Discourse. The first Proposition was this: *All Traditionary* Christians *believe the same to day they did yesterday, & so up to* the time of *our* B. Saviour. This you seem to deny in regard they may perhaps *be so call'd from their adhereing to a Tradition which reaches not so high as our* Saviours *time, but only pretends to it*, whither we only *pretend* to it or no will be seen hereafter, when the Fourth Proposition comes to be examin'd. In the mean time pray jumble not two Questions which are *distinct*, and ought to be kept so. The whole Business here is about the *use* or *Sense* of the word [*Traditionary*] & how we both take it in our present Controversy. Now that we both agree in the Notion of [*Tradition*,] whence [*Traditionary*] is deriv'd, is evident by this, that we lay claim to such a Tradition as reaches to *Christ*, and go about to prove it; you deny our Claim, and endeavour to *disprove* it: But 'tis evident you *deny* the *same* thing to us which we *lay Claim to*; otherwise we should not talk of the same Thing, and so should not understand one another, nor could discourse together; wherefore 'tis manifest we both agree in the Notion or *Meaning* of that *Word*, however we disagree in the *Application* of it to the *Persons*. Nor do we pretend in the least, what you would put upon us here, to inferr *hence* that this body of Christians that now adheres to it, *did always* so; but only contend, that if they did not *ever* adhere to it, they must have deserted it and taken up another Rule, and so, cease to be true Claimers of a Tradition from *Christ*, or *Traditionary Christians*. Moreover, we judge we have *right* to lay Claim to it, till we be driven out of it by a former and better Title; since we were in possession of this Rule at the time of the Reformation, or held all our Faith upon that tenure.

37. The second Proposition is this: *If they follow this*

Rule

Rule they can never err in Faith. Whence follows the Third; [*And therefore they are Infallible.*] Your Answer Sir, to this. Can they adhere still to what was deliver'd, and yet *err* in *Faith*, if what was still deliver'd, was *Christ's* Doctrin. Your Answer is; *His Friend tells us this is palpably self-evident.* And does not his *Adversary* confess it too? Do not your self acknowledge it in your 21*st*, and 22*d*. Pages, and say you *must lay by your Reason, turn* Romanist, *and renounce your Private Judgement*, if you did not grant it. And can the Reader, so well acquainted with your shuffles, judge it less than *palpably self-evident*, which your humour, so restiff to grant any thing, tho' never so clearly prov'd, is forc't to yield to! Lastly, does his Friend only *tell* you 'tis self-evident? Does not he prove it to be as Evident as 'tis that *the same is the same with it self*? And is not such a thing Evident by its own light, or out of the very Terms, that is, *self-evident*? Pray, Sir, when I *prove* any thing, let the Reader know I did so; and do not thus constantly pretend still that I only *said* so, or *told* you so. A pretty Stratagem to avoid speaking to my *Proofs*; but how honest let the Reader judge. P. 21.

38. But, say you, *unless this Tradition be longer than it is yet prov'd to be, they may follow it, and err all along in following it.* No doubt of it; if it fall short of reaching up to *Christs*, we may follow it, and Err by following it, as all *Hereticks* do in following their novel Traditions. That (*yet*) is a very pretty Word; for it puts the Reader into a conceit that we have produc't nothing from the beginning of the World, to the very time of your Writing, to prove our Tradition reaches to our *Saviours dayes*; and yet, if we challenge you that we *have* prov'd it in the very next words of our Argument, you can make your escape, by saying, that you are not *yet* P. 21.

come to ſpeak to that point, and that you meant no more. Who would think there ſhould be ſuch Vertue in a petty Monoſyllable, as at once to diſgrace *us*, and ſave *you* harmleſs! The ſecond Anſwer to this Point is, *Let it* (the Tradition ſpoken of) *be never ſo long, yet if they follow it not, they may err.* Very good! The Arguers Words are, *If they follow this Rule they cannot err in Faith*; which implies, that, if they *do not*, they *may err*: and you ſay the ſelf-ſame over again, with an ayr of Oppoſition, and there's an Anſwer for us now. As if to *conform* to your Adverſaries Words were to *confute* him, any thing will ſerve, rather than ſay nothing.

39. The fourth Propoſition brought to prove that this Tradition we lay Claim to, does indeed reach to *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, is this, *They could not innovate in Faith, unleſs they did forget what they held the day before, or out of malice alter it.* And here lies the main Streſs of the Controverſy between us; for you have granted here, Page 21. 22. that were this Rule follow'd, they muſt ſtill enjoy the ſame Faith *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* taught; and this Diſcourſe is brought to ſhew they *did* follow it. We are to expect then that your choiceſt Engines muſt be ſet on work to baffle a Proof, which, if it holds, brings ſuch dangerous conſequences after it, and indeed concludes the whole Controverſy. Your firſt Attempt is in plain terms moſt Evident, & a moſt Unconſcionable Falſification. After you had (P. 21.) recited this fourth Propoſition, you immediately add. *Our Author undertakes to make this out more clearly, & therefore we will hear what he ſaith for our better Information.* P. 18. *He asks, did Chriſt teach any Errours?* and ſo you go on reciting that whole Argument, which proves, that if the firſt Fathers believ'd what Chriſt taught, and the ſucceeding

ceeding Sons all along believ'd what their Fathers did, the laſt-born Son in the World believ'd the ſame that Chriſt taught. Pray, Sir, play fair above-board. You have directly falſify'd that *whole* Diſcourſe, by pretending here that the words you cite were to make out that *Fourth Propoſition clearly*, (viz. *That we could not innovate in Faith* &c.) whereas the truth of that Fourth Propoſition was *made out* by me nine pages before (viz. p. 9.) and the Diſcourſe you mention here, as intended to make it out, is found p. 18, 19. and levell'd at a quite different buſineſs: *viz.* that a Church could not *adhere to Tradition*, and at the ſame time *erre*, as you pretended we muſt grant of the Greek Church. Clear your Credit when you can, I charge it upon you as a voluntary Inſincerity: but you ſhall never clear it unleſs by putting out your Reader's eyes, or perſwading him not to uſe them. So that it ſeems let us bring what Arguments we will, you need do no more when they are too hard to anſwer, but apply them to a *wrong Point* they were never mean't to prove, and then 'tis eaſy to ſhew manifeſtly they are frivolous and good for nothing. In the mean time, who ſees not that your Cauſe as well as your Credit is run a ground and like to ſplit, when you are put to ſuch ſhifts! I wonder how this groſs Fault could eſcape Dr. *St's* acute ſight, if he perus'd and review'd your Reflexions.

40. Your Second Anſwer, or rather Cavill, is, that you could make as *fine ſport* with the word [*Notwithſtanding*] as I did, but that, it ſeems, it ſpoils your Gravity. Yet you can diſpence with that Formal humour very eaſily, as oft as a hard Point preſſes you, eſpecially when you are put to *Proving*; nor are we now to learn that you can laugh at a *feather*, when you have nothing of more *weight* to ſay. But, where lies the

Jeſt

Jeſt? I never excepted againſt the *Word*, but the *miſ-applying* it by Dr. *St.* Who, when he was at a loſs to give an Anſwer to Mr. *G*'s Demonſtration, very learnedly and adviſedly *thought it beſt* to deny the Concluſion, Object an Argument of his own againſt it, and then bid the Opponent prove his *Theſis* (which he had prov'd already) *notwithſtanding* his Argument. When you find me thus untowardly making uſe of That, or any other, Word, you are at liberty to except againſt me. In the mean time put this in the number of your Reflections, that when a man pretends to make ſport when there is no occaſion, he but diſcovers his own Folly. But the Point is, Can you make good his *Logick* in this irregular Proceeding? This is what we expected from a writer that undertakes to *defend* him. But the Task is ſo inſuperable, that neither your wonderful Learning, nor Dr. *St.* himſelf, nor all the World to help him can ever be able to do it; unleſs he can make the Schools renounce all Rules of *Art*, and Mankind their *Reaſon*. But what were my words that were ſo mirthful? Why, I deny'd that a Body of men *could adhere to Tradition, and notwithſtanding erre*. Is here any occaſion of *fine ſport*? Or, cannot I uſe a plain word in the Context of my Diſcourſe falling in *naturally*, becauſe he had miſus'd it unskillfully and *inartificially*? I ſee by this ſliding over it ſo gentilely, this is all the Anſwer I am to expect to my 10, 11, 12, 13, 33*d.* and 34*th.* pages; where ſuch Errours againſt all Methods of Diſpute are charg'd upon the Dr. as would banckrupt any mans Credit who had not a large ſtock of it laid in beforehand. And all the favour his beſt Friends can do him to excuſe his *Perſon*, is to refund it upon his *Cauſe*.

41. But, tho' it was granted that Diſcourſe of mine cited

cited by you pag. 21. was so evident, that it was both *unreasonable* and *absurd* to deny it, yet it must not scape without some animadversion. A Fault there must be in it, that's decree'd; and what should that Fault be, but that *good* one of being too Evident. And this, as was shewn formerly, is one of the new tricks taken up to evade Answering. When our Arguments are too clear to be baffled by any (even plausible) Reason, being next to self-evident, or easily reducible to it, to save us the labour you reduce it thither your self, but first vilely deform'd, that it may become a fit Subject for your Jesting way of Confuting. *We will grant him* (say you) *it is impossible to prove that men have err'd notwithstanding they never err'd.* Very excellent! But do you not grant much more; *viz.* that *It is impossible they should adhere to our Rule, and yet erre?* You *do*, and, in doing so, you grant the whole substance of my Discourse. And so *let them laugh that win.* I am sure you have *lost* by this forc't Confession, that Tradition is a certain *Rule*, and that I have prov'd it evidently. Which no man will grant of *your* Rule that is in his wits, nor can the wit of all the men in the World ever *prove* it to be *such* as you have *yielded* ours to be.

42. The same disingenuity often repeated gives all the force to your next *Sect.* For, 1. *You pretend we but *suppose it hitherto, that these Traditionary Christians adhere undecliningly to a Tradition descending really, and invariably from Christ and his Apostles*, &c. How! only *suppos'd hitherto?* Was it not *prov'd*, and not barely *suppos'd* in the Fourth Proposition, and made good by me, p. 9. If you will not come up to it, but stand hovering, fencing, jesting, falsifying and capering about by the way, must we be blam'd as barely *supposing it hitherto?* 2. You falsify our words: For who ever said *p. 22.

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a *Suppoſition* is *Self-evident*, which every one ſees, while 'tis barely a *Suppoſition*, is not *Evident* at all. Why quote you not the page where we ſay this? Becauſe you would not be caught. 3. You falſify again without care of credit or regard to your Reader, in affirming, that *from this ſelf-evident Suppoſition I neceſſarily conclude thus; ſuppoſe Traditionary Chriſtians neither did nor could erre, it is certain they neither did nor could erre.* But why again no place quoted! Becauſe you had again falſify'd it, and durſt not hazard diſcovery.

43. I perceive, your play here (p. 22.) is to disjoint our Diſcourſe, and jumble all the pieces of it confuſedly together; and, ſo, it muſt be my Work to rectify what you had ſo induſtriouſly unravell'd. Since then Mr. *G.* had made uſe of theſe words [*Traditionary Chriſtians*] their Senſe was firſt to be explain'd, and therefore I *declar'd that the meaning of them was, *ſuch Chriſtians* as proceeded upon an *Immediate Delivery* not only at preſent, or *ſince the Council of Trent, or ſome hundreds of years before*, as you put upon us, p. 20. but upwards till Chriſt's time; and all the advantage I gain'd thence was that in caſe they did *not* adhere to it *all along*, it would follow that the *pretended* Traditionary Chriſtians (*our ſelves*) were not *really ſuch*; and ſo the Subject of our Diſpute would be loſt, and we ſhould receive a perfect foil. Could any thing be clearer or more candid? Yet, how many ſhuffles, and baffling Jeſts, you have been pleas'd to beſtow on us inſtead of admitting ſo clear a Propoſition; to how many wrong ends you have apply'd it, never thought on by us, we have already ſeen. For the Truth is, you are ſo horribly afraid of any connected Diſcourſe, that you dare not ſo much as ſuffer it to peep out, but it alarums your Jealouſie; no, not the

* My Firſt Letter, p. 8.

the very ſignification of the ſingle words to be diſtinctly known, or the moſt Evident Propoſition, tho' it be Indifferent to either Cauſe, to be admitted. Now let's ſee what you ſay to it; you make it amount to this: *Suppoſe Traditionary Chriſtians neither did nor could err, it is Certain they neither did nor could err.* Which you call my *neceſſary Concluſion from my ſelf-evident Suppoſition.* You improve mightily, Sir, in your Talent of Inſincerity. Our entire Diſcourſe runs thus, if we muſt needs put it into Form for you. *Thoſe who adhere to Tradition all along from the beginning, neither did nor could err in Faith,* (otherwiſe they would not be Adherents to *Tradition* or *Traditionary Chriſtians*). But this Body of Chriſtians, call'd *The Roman Catholick Church, does now,* and *did from time to time adhere to Tradition. Therefore this Body of Chriſtians, call'd The Roman Catholick Church, neither did or could err in Faith.* This is Mr. G's Argument: The *Major* is granted by * your ſelf. The Proof of the *Minor* is contain'd in Mr. G's Fourth Propoſition, which I have ſhown to be valid in my Firſt Letter, *p.* 9. and the Diſcuſſion of it is now under hand. The *Concluſion* is in greateſt danger, leſt you ſhould, according to the new True-Proteſtant Logick, deny it again, and bring ſome Inſtance againſt it; otherwiſe, ſince it follows evidently, it will ſhift well enough for it ſelf. This, I ſay, is our intire Diſcourſe; all the reſt is your flaſhy Drollery, your ever faithful Friend, when you are perplext how to Anſwer.

* P. 22.

* P. 21, 22.

44. The Argument then for the Perpetuity of our Tradition from Chriſt's time, runs thus. *They could not innovate in Faith, unleſs they did forget what they held the day before, or, out of malice, alter it.* To enforce this Argument, I diſcours'd * thus. *You do not, I ſuppoſe, deſire we ſhould prove that men had alwaies Me-*

* My Firſt Letter, P. 32.

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morses, or *that Christians were never malicious enough to damn themselves and their Posterities wittingly; and yet, it can stick no where else.* Yet you are such a bold Undertaker, that you will needs prove they may be *both* thus *Forgetful* and thus *Malicious*. A hard Task one would think; especially since the Argument proceeds upon Forgetting and *Altering* what they Remembred and Held *Yesterday*. Your First Reason to prove they might be thus *Forgetful*, is; because *Otherwise it is hard to say why the Pen-men of the Scripture should have been at the needless pains to write it.* Let's apply this to the Argument, and your Discourse is this. 'Tis hard to say that Christians could have remembred their *Yesterday's* Faith, had not Scripture been writ. Now, pray Sir, be serious, and tell us, Do you think there is any danger, or even possibility of this among the very Protestants in *England*, tho' they had never a Bible to read to morrow? How many of them read not so much as a Chapter in three or four days, how many not in a much longer time; nay, how few of them read *all their Faith* there in a Year, or even in their whole Life; and yet they retain the memory not only of their *Yesterdays*, but *last Years* Faith? What a weakness is this, to suppose Miracles must be done for no other end, but that you may answer our Argument? The Reasons why Scripture was writ, you might have read in St. *Paul* to *Timothy*; where there is no such thing as to make men remember their *Yesterdays* Faith, nor that Scripture is of Necessity at all; but only that 'tis *Profitable* for many Uses there enumerated. Your Second Argument to confute our Demonstration, is a Text, 2 *Pet.* 1. 15. by which you will convince us, *Mens memories are not alwaies so faithful*: You must mean to remember their *Yesterdays Faith*; for

P. 23.

2 Tim. c. 3. v. 16, 17.

for this Degree of Memory only the Argument insists on. But what says that B. Apostle? *I will endeavour, that you may be able, after my Decease, to have these things always in remembrance.* Now, there is not so much as *one Word* in the *whole Chapter* concerning the remembring or forgetting their *Faith*, much less the Faith they held *Yesterday*; or leaving their *Faith* in Writing for that purpose, but only (Faith *suppos'd*) of remembring his particular Exhortations to Good Life; and, by thus inculcating them, to *stir them up* (as 'tis said, *v.* 13.) to Christian Virtue, and leaving such things in Writing to *that* end. Now, such Spiritual and Moral Instructions are both *easily Intelligible*, especially, since he had taught the same to them formerly; and Man's Natural Corruption making even good men apt to slide back from the high degree of Perfection in which they had been educated; no doubt a Letter left by that Holy Apostle, now near his death, as he there tells them, would strike them more feelingly, and *excite* them more effectually to pursue that Course of Holy Life, in which he had instructed them. What miserable Stuff is this? Would not Faith have an excellent *Basis*, did it depend on Scripture interpreted by your Private Judgments. When this one Instance manifests, you have the boldness to quote Scripture for any thing, tho' never so disparate and unconcerning, and then blasphemously nick-name it *God's Word*, when 'tis nothing at all to the purpose. But, I beseech you, Sir, let's have the Return of one *Scholar* to *another*. If our Argument lye too *open*, or the Connexion in it be too *slack*, speak to it as you ought; but think not your *Private Interpretations* a competent Solution to *Demonstrations*. If such wretched Answers may serve the turn, the Schools and Universities may shut up

Shop, and Reasoning bid adieu to the World: Every Fop will find a Text he can hook in, nor will he fail of interpreting it blindly to *his* own purpose, when he is gravell'd with an Argument; and of calling it *God's Word* when he has done. Who will not see you are sinking, when you catch at such Straws and weak Twigs to keep you above Water.

45. By this time the Reader will be satisfy'd, that *Notwithstanding* all you have answer'd, Men had *Memory* enough not to forget their *Yesterdays Faith*. Next, you go about to prove *Christians* may be *malicious* enough to *alter* it. *May not Christians* (say you, *p.* 23.) *through malice and wickedness, be as careless of preserving the Faith, as in maintaining Holiness in themselves or their Posterity, when they know that Sin is as damnable as Errour?* Be Judge your self. Do not *many* of your Congregation (and the like may be said of all Sects) sin *often*, and yet *few* or *none* of them desert their Faith *once?* The reasons why the Parallel holds not, are these. 1. Sins are generally private; at least, Men do for the most part endeavour and hope to conceal their Faults, for fear of shame and discredit. But the Change of Faith must be *profest* and *open*; otherwise it alters not the case; and Posterity will still believe on, according as things appear outwardly. 2. Sinners are seldome Malicious to that degree, as to resolve firmly to persist so to the end of their Lives; but generally fall out of frailty, and intend and hope to repent. And so this very thing will oblige them still to hold to their former *Faith*, which (as Experience tells them) furnishes Sinners with means of Repentance. 3. Man's Nature being inclin'd to Truth, scarce one man tells a Lye, but hopes to cloak it. But here, when they deliver *another Faith* for the *same* that was held *Yester-*

day,

day, every man muſt know his Neighbour to be an abominable ſhameleſs Lyar; and, the Concern being ſo Sacred, muſt hold himſelf and all his fellow-Alterers the wickedſt men living. Unleſs it be ſaid they went conſcientiouſly upon ſome other ground than Tradition; for to pretend to be ſav'd by Tenets held upon *no ground at all*, is abſolutely impoſſible to conſiſt with Rational Nature. But 'tis impoſſible they ſhould take up another Ground: Becauſe if they could not innovate in *Faith*, they could not innovate in that upon which they held *all* their Faith. Nor could they be certain, but all their former Faith might be renounc'd, if a new Rule of Faith were taken up. To hear of which, could not conſiſt with the temper of Chriſtians, to bear a loſs for *all their Faith*. Beſides, Men are more tenacious of their *Principles*, eſpecially if they have gain'd a vaſt Credit by their long Continuance, than they are to relinquiſh all they have receiv'd upon thoſe Principles. Again, Tradition is the Authority of the whole *Eccleſia Docens*, the Chiefeſt part of (I might ſay the *Eccleſia Credens* too) witneſſing the deliver'd Faith; which is ſo vaſt a Body, that it could never (were there nothing but its own Intereſt) permit it ſelf to be thought to have atteſted a Lye hitherto: Add, That none could be competent Judges what was fit to be a Rule of Faith, but They who were ſo concern'd both in Duty and Intereſt, Tradition ſhould not be ſet aſide. Which conſiderations clearly evince an Univerſal Change in the Rule of Faith; and this over the whole Body of Believers is abſolutely impracticable. Laſtly, There muſt be ſome great time between their diſcarding Tradition and eſpouſing a New Rule; during which time, we muſt imagin the whole Church (except perhaps ſome few that diſcourſe it firſt) would be made up

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of *Seekers*; ſome hovering one way, ſome another; in which caſe they would as yet have no *Faith*, and conſequently there could be no *Church*. 'Tis left then, that if they could innovate in Faith, they muſt pretend to *Tradition* ſtill when they had evidently *deſerted* it; that is, they muſt profeſs to *hold* the *Yeſterdays* Faith, when all the World muſt ſee, and every man's own Heart muſt tell him the contrary: Which is the higheſt Impoſſibility. *Luther* alter'd, *Calvin* alter'd, ſo did many others; but none of them had the face to ſay they ſtill *adher'd* to Tradition, or the Faith deliver'd immediately before, and that they had *not alter'd*. 4. Men fall into Sins through Temptations, and Temptations are *various*, according to mens Tempers and Circumſtances; whence it happens, that one falls into *one* ſort of Sin, others into another, as things light. But 'tis impoſſible there ſhould have been Cauſes laid in the World, ſo Univerſal, as to reach a whole Body of men conſiſting of ſo many Millions of different Countries, Tempers, and Circumſtances, ſo as to impel them effectually to fall into the ſame Individual ſort of ſin, and *this* ſuch a horrid and ſhameful one, *viz.* The Altering the *Faith* they hop'd to be ſav'd by, and this ſo ſuddenly. The Nature of the thing ſhows evidently 'tis above *Chance*; and the very *Intereſt* of the World would forbid ſuch a *Conſpiracy*, were there neither Religion, Conſcience, nor Common Humanity in it. Their very Paſſions, Diſaffections, and Enmity to one another, would make them diſagree in carrying on ſuch a wicked Project: Their Natural Tempers, abſtracting from their Common Propenſion to Truth, and the care of preſerving their Credits utterly loſt by ſpeaking ſuch open and pernicious falſhoods, would render them apt, out of a meer Antipathy of Humour,

to

to oppoſe one another; and all this, ſuppoſing there were no Goodneſs at all in the World; to ſuppoſe which, evacuates all Chriſtian Motives, and their Efficacy, and makes our dear Saviour preach and dye *in vain*; eſpecially, ſince there never wanted, no, not even in the worſt times, a fair Degree of Diſciplin to *apply* thoſe Motives. Nay, State-Intereſt, or the Quarrels of Princes, would make them glad to take hence an Advantage againſt their emulous Neighbours; and to think it the beſt Policy to lay hold on ſuch an occaſion, to fight in behalf of *Faith* and Common *Honeſty*, againſt a pack of ſhameleſs Lyars, and Deſerters both of Religion and Human Nature, who car'd not what became of their own Salvation, or that of others. Laſtly, Theſe Cauſes thwarting the Univerſal Alteration of *Faith*, while Chriſtians proceeded on the former Rule of Tradition; and full as much hindring the taking up a New Rule in oppoſition to the Teſtimony of the Univerſal Church; as there could be no Cauſe to make men conſpire to alter the *Teſterdays Faith*, ſo *Chriſtian Motives*, which contain the greateſt *Hopes* and *Fears* imaginable, the Hopes of never-ending Bliſs, and Fears of Eternal and Intolerable Miſery, which were believ'd and apply'd to the generality of Chriſtians, could not, on the contrary ſide, but influence them moſt powerfully to preſerve unchanged and inviolate both the Rule and the Faith. 'Tis as Certain then, that a very Great Body of Adherers to Tradition, and conſequently to the firſt-deliver'd Faith, would ſtill remain on Foot in the World, as that *Effects* could not be without *Proper Cauſes*, or that *Motives*, which are the *Proper Cauſes* to work upon *Rational Nature*, will produce their *Effect*: I mean ſuch Motives as engage their very Nature. Add, That ſuch a Change muſt needs

needs have been publickly known; and, ſo, have excited the Pens, Tongues, Intereſts (perhaps Swords too) of the Traditionary and Innovating Party one againſt another, at the time of the Change; as we ſee has happen'd in our late Alterations or Reformations. Yet no ſuch thing was ever mentioned in Hiſtory; or come to us by Tradition; or any thing alledg'd, but ſome differences amongſt particular Spectators, and their Adherents ſiding with them; which amounts to nothing comparable to that Univerſal and moſt Memorable Concuſſion, ſuch a vaſt Change as this we ſpeak of, muſt needs have made in the whole Body of the Church.

46. Summing up then this Diſcourſe, 'tis manifeſt you have no way to anſwer our Argument, but by ſuppoſing there was a time (the Lord knows when) in which there were no conſiderable Body of Men in the World, either good Chriſtians, honeſt men, or valuing their Credit; but only a company of brutiſh, Godleſs, Lying Ruffians, without the leaſt Degree of Grace or Shame in them. Unfortunate Confuter! *Ariſtotle* lookt upon things as they were; *Plato* on things as they ſhould be; but, to make a ſhow of an Anſwer to our Argument, you would have your Readers look upon the Chriſtian World, as it *neither is, was, ſhould* be, or *can* be.

P. 23. 47. But you object. *What if all Sons did not underſtand aright all that Fathers had Taught them! Anſwer.* If *All* did not, *moſt* of the Intelligent and Paſtours, who were of greater Authority than thoſe, *ſome* leſs-underſtanding Perſons, and ty'd by their Duty and Office to inſtruct their Ignorance, would and could eaſily do it, when the Doctrin, open Practice and Diſciplin of the Chriſtian Church was ſettled, and made it both

both ſo obligatory and ſo eaſie. 2. *What if ſome Sons were ſo negligent as to take no care either to remember or teach what they had been taught by their Fathers? Anſw.* If only *ſome* were ſo, then thoſe who were diligent to do this, would reprehend them, and ſee to have things amended, and thoſe careleſs Perſons, eſpecially if Paſtours, reduc'd to their Duty; there being Orders on foot in the World to oblige them to it. Beſides, 'tis an unheard-of *Negligence*, not to know or remember the *next day* the Faith they held the *day before*; nor did it require that care you pretend to retain the remembrance of it four and twenty hours: 3. *What if ſome, through Ambition, Vain-Glory and Popularity,* P. 24. *ſet a broach New Doctrines, and taught them for Apoſtolical Tradition? Anſw.* If only *ſome* were ſo, then thoſe *others*, who were good Men, and free from thoſe Vices, would ſet themſelves to oppoſe them, make known their *falſe* pretences, and lay open their *Novelties*: Both Reaſon aſſuring us, that Good men uſe not to be ſo ſtupidly careleſs in ſuch Sacred Concerns; and Hiſtory informing us they were ever very zealouſly vigilant to oppoſe Hereticks, when ever they began to vent their Peſtilent Doctrins. 4. *What if others, to ſave themſelves from Perſecution, conceal'd part, and corrupted more of the Doctrin of Chriſt by their own Traditions, taken not from Chriſt, but from their Forefathers, Jews or Gentiles?* Then thoſe who were *out of* Perſecution, or *valu'd it not* ſo much as they did their Conſcience, would oppoſe their Unchriſtian Proceedings: Then the Fathers, Doctors, and Paſtours of the Church would *reveal* what they had *conceal'd*, *reſtore* what they had *corrupted*, and manifeſt that their Pretences and Subterfuges were Falſe, and that the Doctrin they ſubintroduc'd, had not deſcended by the open Channel of the Chriſtian Church's Tradition. 5. *What*

if some through a blind Zeal, ignorant Devotion, Superstitions, Rigour, and vain Credulity, added many things to the Doctrin of Christ; which by degrees grew into more general esteem, till at last they were own'd, and impos'd as necessary to be believ'd and practised? Answ. If they belong'd to Faith, they could not come in, while the Rule of Tradition was adher'd to, as has been prov'd and granted: Tho' perhaps some Points involv'd in the main Body of Faith, yet so *particularly* or *universally* known, might, on emergent occasions, be singled out, defin'd and more 'specially recommended than formerly; without any Detriment to the Faith received, but rather to the Advantage and farther Explication of it. And, as for unwarrantable Practices, as they belong not to *Faith*, so they do not concern our present business. *6. What if Errour any of these Ways brought forth, grew, multiply'd, spread, obtain'd most power, and drove out all that held the naked Truth out of all those Countries where it came?* Of which *all Histories furnish us with Instances. Answ.* But does any History tell you this Errour spread over the *whole* Church, without your supposing the Question that such or such a Tenet is an *Errour*, which you *pretend* such; which is above the Skill of Historians to decide; and is only to be determin'd by examining First who have, who have not a *Certain Rule of Faith.* Besides, *Errour in Faith* never yet *appeared*, even though abetted by Great men in the Church, but it was *oppos'd*; and Truth grew clearer by the Opposition made to it; and tho' for a while it grew under the shadow of some Particular State, yet no History ever recorded, that all the States of *Christendom* ever joyn'd to protect it.

48. Well, but what are all these rambling Questions to our Argument, which insists on the impossibility of *Altering*

ring the yesterdays Faith, but either out of want of Memory, or out of Malice? Apply them to this, and they lose all their force, how plausibly soever a witty man, that talks at rovers, supposes all to be Errour, which the Revolting Party Held, and never considers the Nature of Christian Mankind and their Circumstances, may descant upon it: For what Paradox is there, tho' never so ridiculous, that Wit discoursing thus wildly and at randome, cannot make plausible? Our General Objection then against *your whole Paragraph is this, that you never apply your several *What ifs?* to our Argument. Besides, that you pretend in the beginning of it that you will shew other Reasons of such an Alteration, which are neither *Forgetfulness* nor *Malice*; and yet most of those you here assign are *Defects of Goodness*, which implies some degree of *Malice*, and some of them, the highest Malice that can be. *P. 23. 24. P. 23.

49. But (say you) we *must seek out a new Medium to prove our Church Infallible*, for this already brought, proves only she does not err *so long as she holds to Tradition*; but *still* she may err, *if* she *leaves it*; wherefore we must prove she *cannot leave Tradition*, or else *She* is not *Infallible*, and so we are but where we were. And do not you see this is already prov'd to your Hand? For (not to repeat the many Reasons produc't for this Point, *Sect.* 45.) *Innovation* and *Tradition* being formerly and diametrically opposite, what proves she could not *Innovate*, proves also that she could not *leave Tradition*; for this were to *Innovate*. And this, our Argument you see has already *prov'd*; nor is the force of that Proof weaken'd by any thing you have hitherto *said*. I wonder you should dissemble a thing so obvious, and run forwards upon that P. 25.

affected Inadvertence of yours, as if it were a buſineſs unthought of by us before, and requir'd a *new Medium*, whereas it is the very thing our Argument chiefly aims at: and for which, we had of our own accord, without any one's bidding, made proviſion for before hand.

P. 25. 50. Your next *Sect. P.* 25. would perſwade us rather to prove our Church *free from Errour*, *which* (ſay you) *is a much eaſier task, if ſhe be ſo, than to prove Her Self Infallible.* Very Good! Your wiſe advice amounts to this, that you would have us *prove* our *Concluſion* without beginning with our *Premiſes*, or *Principles*. If this be Yours and Dr. *St*'s Logick, 'tis a very prepoſterous one; and can only be made good by a Figure call'd *Hyſteron Proteron*, or *Cart before Horſe*. Though I muſt confeſs it keeps *decorum*, and is perfectly of the ſame hue with all your Logick hitherto. Pleaſe then to know that all our Faith may be Errour, if the *Teſtimony of the Church*, (our Rule) may be Erroneous: and, if it *cannot*, nothing we hold of Faith *can* be ſo. Again, what mean you by our *proving her free from Errour*? Your meaning is, we ſhould only prove ſhe Embraces no Errour *now*; but what Proviſion would this make for Her not falling perhaps into Errour *to morrow*? We ought then to *prove* (and ſo ought you too of *your* Rule) that if we adhere to it, it can *at no time* permit us to *Err*; which could not be if at any time it *might be deceiv'd it ſelf*, or leave us *deceiv'd* while we follow it. Beſides, if it were granted *Fallible* or Liable to Errour, by what more evident Light, or greater and clearer Teſtimony could we guide our ſelves to know when it *did actually Err*, when *not* in deriving down *Chriſts* Doctrine? Or by what more certain Way could we be directed to arrive at Chriſt's *ſence*. If there were

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any ſuch, *It* and not *Tradition* ought to be our *Rule*. We return you then your Counſel back with many Thanks, for it neither ſuits in any degree with Logick, Common Senſe, our *own*, or any *other* Principles. But however it ſuites better with your convenience, than theſe crabbed Demonſtrations: For you tell us *One ſingle Inſtance of her erring is enough to Anſwer all the Arguments can be brought for her Infallibility.* Sure you have a mind to convince all Schollars that read your Books, you never heard of Logick in your Life: Or elſe you would endeavour to baffle the whole Art of *Diſcourſing*, becauſe you foreſee 'tis like to baffle you. An *Inſtance* may perhaps make an *Objection* againſt the *Concluſion* taking it *ſingle* for a meer propoſition and not as ſtanding under *Proof*; but *Arguments* are *anſwer'd* by finding defects in the *Premiſes* or the *Conſequence*. You might have ſeen (to uſe your own words) better *Logick read to the* D. *of* P. in my Pag. 10 and 11. Where 'tis ſhewn you, that *if the Premiſes be right, and the Inference good, the Concluſion muſt be as neceſſarily True, as that the ſame Thing cannot be, and not be at once*: Yet, you take no notice of it, but ſtill run on obſtinately to confute all the Schools and Univerſities that ever Writ or Taught *Logick* from the beginning of the World, to the Time of His and Your Writing. The Truth is, you are ſick of the Argument, and would ſhift it off on any Faſhion. Bring what Inſtances you pleaſe; But firſt you are to Anſwer our Argument, and next, to ſee the Authority that qualifies your Inſtance for an Argument, be above Morally Certain; otherwiſe it will be beyond the power of any Logick to make it *conclude*: For the force of that *Maxim* on which the *Concluſiveneſs* of any Argument is built, is far beyond any *Moral Certainty*; Nor let *Dr. St.* think Ibid.

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to ſtand arguing ſtill *ad hominem*; but let him be ſure his Inſtance infers the *Truth* of his Concluſion, when it comes to be put to the Teſt of a Syllogiſm. This we will expect from him; ſince it is the Right of the Reſpondent to deny any thing that is not driven up to *Evidence*; and by that Teſt we will judge of your Inſtance and other Arguments, if you have any that you will vouch to be *Demonſtrative*, that is, *Concluſive*.

51. You ſeem ſo kind as *not to undertake to prove that an erring Church adheres to Tradition*, if it be *True Apoſtolical Tradition*, and that it *adheres to it wholly and ſolely*. I a little wonder at this; for if you mean not by *Tradition* ſuch a one as is built on Living voice and Practice, you ran quite away from the Point; If ſuch a one; you quit your own Rule, by requiring men ſhould *adhere to the other wholly and Solely*, and admit that a Church adhering to ſuch a Tradition is not an *Erring Church*. I inferr: Therefore, till you anſwer our Argument which proves that our Tradition could not be interrupted by any Innovation, you cannot with reaſon deny but ours is *ſuch*. You think Infallibility a kind of barr againſt our mutual Agreement; as if there were any hopes or even poſſibility men's Minds ſhould center, unleſs it be in ſomething that is *Abſolutely* Certain or *Evident*. Shew us ſomething elſe endu'd with ſuch an Evidence as is able to oblige Human Nature to an Univerſal Acceptation and Conviction, and then blame us for maintaining Infallibility. Till then pray, excuſe us for making ſuch Proviſion for Faith, as ſets it beyond Poſſibility of Falſehood. You drop ſome inſignificant Exceptions after the Shower of your ſhrewd (inviſible) Reaſons. As that our * *Argument muſt prove that* no man *that hath been taught the Faith can ever err from it*; and yet ſtill withall

* P. 26.

withall, *confeſs that a Church, following Tradition now, may leave it afterwards.* This were an Incoherence with a witneſs: But how do you ſhew our Argument *muſt* prove this abſurd poſition! Onely with ſaying it here over and over again, without the leaſt attempt to ſhew from our words or Doctrine, this pretended *neceſſity*, that we muſt both contradict our ſelves ſo groſſely, and beſides go againſt our daily experience. I do aſſure the Reader we have no where either ſuch words or ſenſe, and that 'tis meerly a falſe ſham or ſome weak deduction of yours, for want of ſome better thing to ſay. Our Tenet is that, tho' not one ſingle man can erre while he *adheres* to our *Rule*, yet even ſome particular Churches may leave off *adhering* to Tradition, and ſo *err* in Faith. Onely we ſay that the main Body of the Church conſiſting of all particular Churches that compound Chriſtianity, being ſupported by Motives of adhering to the former Faith, ſo Prevalent, and Univerſal, and *apply'd* to a very vaſt multitude of them, cannot conſpire to relinquiſh this Rule, go againſt and diſgrace their own Teſtimony, nor conſequently err in Faith. The word [*All*] indeed, and [*They*] in each Propoſition are diſtributive, and appliable to each ſingle man; but do you find the leaſt word in any of them, that ſayes that ſingle men or great multitudes *may* not out of malice *alter* Faith? Where find you *that!* Or that they cannot deſert the *Rule*, and by Conſequence their *Faith.* Pray, be not ſo liberal of our Conceſſions, without ſhewing ſomthing under our hands for it.

52. But you ſum up your Solution of our Demonſtration with an admirable grace, or rather you give us the very Quinteſſence of your Anſwer to it in theſe few words. *The Church of Rome ſays all have broke the* P. 27. *Rule*

Rule of Tradition but ſhe onely, and *proves* it, by *ſaying* that *ſhe holds the ſame to day ſhe did yeſterday, and ſo up to our B. Saviours time.* You proceed. *We call again for a Proof of this. She tells us, If ſhe follow'd this Rule ſhe could never err in Faith. But did ſhe follow this Rule? She ſays ſhe did; and if you will not believe her, there's an end.* How ſmart and victorious this looks? But the beſt is, 'tis wholly built on ſome few of your own wilfull Falſifications. Pray, where did we ever bring theſe Words, [*If ſhe followed this Rule*, &c.] For a *Proof that ſhe holds the ſame to day which ſhe did yeſterday.* Or where did we prove we follow'd this *Rule* only with *iffs*? But why are you ſo ſhy to quote the Pages or Paragraphs where we bring theſe abſurd Proofs? becauſe you would be at Liberty to ſay any thing and yet not expoſe your Credit. And 'tis worth noting, that you point out the Page in other occaſions very diligently; but, when you have a mind to falſify, 'tis ſtill ſuppreſt. 'Tis obſervable too that this inſincerity of yours here is of ſuch advantage to you, that it gains the whole Cauſe. For, if we prove this main Point no better but with *Iffs*, & that our Argument has no force but by ſtanding to your Kindneſs in *Believing what Our Church ſays*, then *there's an End indeed*; for nothing can be more Evident, than, 'tis that in that Suppoſition, we are utterly routed, & our whole Cauſe quite defeated. Now I would entreat the Reader (for You are reſolv'd neither to uſe your Eyes nor Honeſty, leſt they ſhould too openly accuſe you) that he will once more review our Argument, as 'tis put down by Dr. *St.* himſelf, Firſt Letter, *p.* 4. and 5. and made good by me, *p.* 8. and 9. and he will ſee clearly, the firſt half of it was to prove, that *If they follow'd this Rule*, viz. *of believing the ſame to day they did yeſterday, they could never err in Faith*, or were

were *Infallible*: And the other part [*And they could not innovate in Faith, unleſs they did forget what they held the day before, or out of malice alter it*] was brought to prove they did ever follow that Rule. For ſince nothing but *Innovation* can break the Chain of Tradition, whoever proves they *could not innovate*, proves directly they could not *recede from Tradition*. Nay, 'twas confeſt by Dr. *St.* himſelf, when he was as yet in better circumſtances, (Firſt Letter, p. 5. l. 4.) that *we prov'd our Church could not innovate*, by the *Medium* now mention'd. Yet you have the Confidence to tell the Reader, *ſhe only ſays ſhe follows this Rule; and if you will not believe her, there's an end*: Whereas you ought in candour to have ſaid, *They prov'd ſhe follow'd, and could not but follow this Rule; but I cannot anſwer their Argument, and there's an End.* See what you have brought upon your ſelf, and how fatal it is to your pretended Anſwer, that as you* began your Reply to this 4th. Propoſition with a moſt wicked Falſification, ſo you cloſe it up here with a double one, and thoſe too of ſo large a ſize, that were they True, they had carry'd all before them. Your intermediate Endeavours are many of them of the *ſame kind*; the reſt *Miſtakes*, (and generally *wilful* ones) which I thought at firſt to have reckon'd up; but they thicken'd ſo upon me, that I ſaw it would be tedious to *count* them, and ſo gave it over. But your excuſe for this inſincere Carriage is, That you do no more than all Writers uſe to do, who have had the bad luck to defend an ill Cauſe, and come to be preſt with Cloſe Truth. All they can do, when they are not able to *give a good acount* of themſelves, is, to bend all their ſtudy and ſeek about for ſhifts, *how they may give no account*. And the D. of P. and you are of this prudent Generation. I ſay once again, 'Tis your *Chief Study* how to *ſhift*; and *long Study* of any thing, with frequent *practice*, makes a man *Excellent at it*; & every man loves moſt to do that he

P. 27.

*See above, Sect. 39.

is Excellent at; and so we are to expect it. To convince the Reader whether I wrong you or no, Put you your Arguments for the Absolute Certainty of your Rule in conveying to us Christ's Sense, and for your following it, as close and home as you can possibly; and see whether do not answer it directly, fairly & squarely, without any of these shifting Excursions or Falsifications: And let our different Carriage be the Test to distinguish the candid Asserters of Truth, from the Insincere Abetters of Errour.

53. After I had shew'd that Scripture privately interpreted could not be a Rule of Faith, the nature and method of our Dispute led me into an Enquiry what was in reality *your* Rule, as *you* are *such a kind of Protestant*; and, to this End I discours't thus; That Scripture was a Generical Rule, common to you and all Heresies in the world; and, That your *Specifical* Rule must be [*as my self and those of my Judgment understand or interpret it.*] And can there be any thing more Evident? Do not they all strive to lay claim to the *Letter* of Scripture for their Rule, as well as *you*? Do not they all, as much as *you*, rely upon it, and avail themselves by quoting it still, and endeavouring to shew it favourable to their respective Tenets? Plain Experience informs us and every one, they all do this, and that too, with an ardour and earnestness equal to yours, as far as we can discern. In this then you *all* agree; and therefore 'tis beyond all dispute, Scripture is your *Common* or *Generical* Rule, if we may believe your Carriage and Profession. Now let's see what 'tis you disagree in. And 'tis manifest you *disagree* in the *Sense* of Scripture; otherwise, the Sense of Scripture being *God's Sense* or *your Faith*, you would be of the *same Faith*; which cannot be pretended, since you contradict them, and they You, in matters belonging to Faith; and What's the Way to arrive at the *Sense* of Scripture? Certainly the *Interpreting* it; for *Interpretation* signifies in proper

speech

ſpeech the *Giving or Aſſigning to Words their ſenſe*; and do not you accept that Senſe of Scripture for your Faith which your Private Judgment interpreting it, conceives to be truly its meaning; and they, in like manner, as they apprehend it, ought to be interpreted? Is it not for this very end you ſo cry up your Judgment of *Diſcretion*, and that you are not to ſubmit to the Decrees of Councils or Conſent of Fathers, farther than you conceive them agreeable to the Word of God? Does not Dr. *St.* profeſs openly, that his ſober *Enquirer* may underſtand the Explicit Senſe of Implicit Points that are Doubtful (ſuch as all main Points of Faith are) without the Church's *help*, (Second Letter, p. 21.) that is, without any Publick Interpreter? And, Will you after this deny that Scripture is your *General* Rule in which you agree with all Hereticks; and your *ſpecifical*, peculiar or proper Rule, in which *you* differ from *them*, and *they from one another*, is Scripture, as *Interpreted by your ſelves*? The thing is plain, let's ſee what you ſay to it. You, with a very dexterous artifice, *grant* and *not grant* it, as we ſhall ſee anon: and tell us, 1. That *Scripture is and ought to be common to all Hereticks, tho' they miſerably abuſe it.* Pray, Sir, uſe my words; I ſaid, *a Common* Rule to them and you; and, Can that be truly a *Rule*, which they direct themſelves by and yet warp into Errour? *You* tell us indeed *they miſerably abuſe it*; and the *Socinians* will ſay the ſame of *you*, while you pretend to prove thence Chriſt is God. And how ſhall this Quarrel be decided? For 'tis hitherto a drawn Match between you, while you fight with that ambidextrous Weapon, *Scripture's Letter interpretable by Private Judgments.* The Point ſtill ſticks: How can an indifferent man, ſeeking for Faith by *your Rule*, be ſatiſfy'd *They* abuſe it more than *You*? Muſt not you be oblig'd to ſhew him ſome clearer Light than They have, and that this Light juſtifies you for judging thus harſhly of them, that they are ſuch *miſerable Abuſers of Scripture*?

And, if you do not, must he not in true reason judge 'tis pretended by you *gratis*; as also, that you are highly uncharitable, to charge them downright with so hainous a Crime? 'Tis that *farther degree of Light* in You that must justifie you for these pretences, which we would gladly see; for, whatever it is, 'tis *That* which distinguishes *you* from *them*, and sets you up to be *Right Users* of Scripture; that is, it gives you the *Right Sense* of it, or your *Faith*; and so it must difference you Essentially from them in your Grounds or Rule. 'Tis this Light, I say, we would be at; Why is it so shy to shew its Face? 2. Tho' 'tis hard to conceive how they can be said to *abuse* Scripture who *follow* it to their Power; yet, since you will have it allow'd you *gratis*, Does not their pretended *miserable Abuse* of Scripture consist in misinterpreting it? Certainly, you must say it does. And if so, then your *right Interpretation* of it, or your taking it in *a right sense*, is that in which *your right Use* of it consists: wherefore your own Interpretation of it, is, beyond all Evasion, that which differences you from them; and so 'tis your *peculiar* or *specifical* Rule of Faith. 3. Do those Hereticks who thus *miserably abuse* it, do this out of Wilfulness, that is, do they *indeed* understand it right, but *pretend* they do not; or do they use their *endeavour* to *understand* it, and yet *hap* to abuse it by misunderstanding it? If the former, then again you must tell us *gratis*, and ought to make it out to an Indifferent man seeking for Faith, that the *Socinians* (and all the erring Sects) are the most wickedly insincere, and the most blasphemous men in the World, nay, the greatest Hypocrites to boot; to know certainly by Scripture that Christ is God, and yet knowingly impugn his Divinity, voluntarily abuse Scripture they seem so highly to venerate, and pretend Conscience all the while: And yet none but you have such horrid apprehensions of them: and as for my self, seeing how they

they decline no Adverſary at the alledging and comparing Places, how ſedulouſly they make Scripture their Study, and in all appearance adhere to the Letter; I verily believe they *follow it to their power*, but fall into Errour through their misfortune of eſpouſing a wrong *Rule*. And if you ſtill ſay they are thus voluntarily inſincere, I deſire to know of you by what outward ſigns can an indifferent man judge *You* and your Party are not as Inſincere as *They*, or perhaps *more*? Acquaint us, I ſay, for what other Reaſon you ſay this, but becauſe they frame another *Senſe* of Scripture than you do, that is, *interpret* it differently from You? If you can give no other than your own *Interpretation* is the only Light you have to judge them Hereticks, or to determine what's *Hereſie*; and by conſequence to judge what's True *Faith*; and ſo 'tis unavoidably your *Rule of Faith*, of which more by and by. But, if you ſay they *follow* it to their power, and yet err *in Faith*, then the fault not being in *Them*, for *not following* their Rule, their fault muſt be (as it is yours) their *adhering* to a *Rule* which ſecures not men, tho' doing their beſt to underſtand it, from falling into Hereſie; that is, it conſiſts in their pitching upon that for their Rule, which is indeed *no Rule* at all.

54. Your Rule then equally patronizing true Faith and Hereſie, I had reaſon to affirm, that it inferr'd thoſe *blaſphemous* Propoſitions, as *to make Light and Darkneſs very conſiſtent, and Chriſt and* Belial *very good Friends*. Now, this being my Charge, it was manifeſtly your Duty to ſhew it does not patronize true Faith and Hereſie, and by doing ſo, induce thoſe horrid blaſphemies; and to make out, that only true Faith can be grounded on *Scripture privately interpreted*; and therefore, that I had impeach'd it wrongfully. But this was too hard a Point to meddle with. Inſtead of doing this, and clearing your ſelf from Blaſphemy, which

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was directly incumbent on you, you tell the Reader, with a great garb of Gravity, that I ſpeak *Blaſphemy* my ſelf, *Blaſphemy* againſt *God* and his *Holy Word*; when I only mention it while I am charging you with it. And hereupon, like a right Good man, you fall to talk *Godly*, and out of your pure Charity will needs beſtow upon me the Benediction of your *hearty Prayer, that God would give me Repentance unto Life.* Indeed, had I ſaid that *Chriſt* and *Belial* could ever be *reconcil'd*, or advanc'd any Poſition that imply'd it, as yours does, I confeſs, I muſt have been Guilty of a horrid *Blaſphemy.* But, not knowing how to clear your ſelf, for owning no Rule but ſuch a one as equally patronizes Truth and Falſhood, and therefore, by a neceſſary conſequence, infers thoſe Blaſphemies; you very demurely put on a Godly Countenance, and betake your ſelf very charitably to *your* hearty *Prayers.* As much as to ſay, *In good Truth, Sir, I cannot anſwer you, nor ſhew I have any Rule, but what ſerves for Errour as well as Truth; but yet if that may excuſe me, I will be content in lieu of it, to pray for you with all my Heart.* Is not this pleaſant?

55. Thus much for your *Rule* as 'tis *common* to You and all Hereticks. What's your *particular* Rule? Here
P. 28. 1. You take it ill that we will needs know what's your Rule better than your ſelves do; And we take it as ill of You, that you would have us believe *you* before our own Evident Reaſon. We know you cannot *defend* ſuch an inſignificant Rule as your own Interpretations; and therefore are forc'd to *diſown* it, when we preſs you to give a good account of it; with which may very well conſiſt, that you *proceed* upon it when the danger is remote. 2. You aſſure us *Plain Scripture* is *your Rule*;
Ibid. that is, (as appears by your Diſcourſe here) *your* Rule as you are ſuch a kind of Proteſtant. Pray, will you

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explain and unriddle to us this moſt obſcure word [*Plain*] in what kind of Points, to whom, and by what kind of Light, is Scripture taken as your Rule, *Plain?* And let's have ſomething more than a blind Word to work on. Experience tells us Scripture is not *plain*, even in the higheſt Points of Faith, ſince ſo many *follow it*, and yet go aſtray. Again, if it be ſo *plain*, all your *uſeful Helps* are *needleſs*; and Laſtly, Scripture conceiv'd by you to be *plain*, which is your *particular Rule*, can never be made out to be *Abſolutely Certain*; for the *Socinians* too proceed upon Scripture, *Plain to them*, as their Rule, and yet *err*; which evinces 'tis not ſo plain as to convince and certainly enlighten Human Reaſon attending to it: An evident Argument, that both the one and the other do but fancy it *plain*, but that, in reality, 'tis Plain to *neither*. 3. You declare, that *the Interpretation of it by any Sect of people, Romaniſts or others, is Extrinſical to it, and no conſtitutive difference of it.* That *the Interpretation of Romaniſts* is not the *particular Rule* of *Your Proteſtants*, all the World knew before; which makes it frivolous to tell us ſo here. Nor do we challenge you, or pretend, that the Interpretation of *any other Sect* is your Rule; for we told you, that the Interpretation of *each* Sect, reſpectively, was its *particular Rule*. 'Tis **your own** Interpretation we ſaid was your Rule; inſtead of granting or denying which, you ſhuffle about, and talk of the Interpretation of *Romaniſts*, and other Sects. But, if (which is ſtrangely expreſt) in *other Sects* you include your *own* too, 'tis all one to my Diſcourſe. For, whether you regard the Interpretation of your *own* Sect, or make account, that as each individual Angel is a diſtinct *Species*, ſo each individual Interpreter among you is a diſtinct *Sect*, ſtill Scripture, as *interpretable by your ſelves*, is your particular Rule, and not Extrinſical to it. For let me ask you once more, Is not the *Senſe* P. 28.

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of Scripture your *Faith*? and, Is not that Eſſentially your *Particular Rule of Faith*, that gives you your *Particular Faith*? and, Muſt I mind you again, that it is the very Eſſence (as I may ſay) or nature of *Interpretation* to give you the *Senſe* of the Words of Scripture, which in our caſe is your *Faith*. Wriggle then ſtill which way you pleaſe, you can never avoid, but your *own Interpretation of Scripture* is your *Particular Rule*; taking you either for a whole Sect, an Individual, or Both.

56. At length, as a man in danger when he is follow'd cloſe at the Heels, and ready to be caught, takes a deſperate leap, tho' he hazards himſelf a miſchief; you venture boldly to declare what is your particular Rule, *as differenced from both* Romaniſts, *and other Hereticks and Sectaries*; viz. *Scripture plainly delivering a Senſe own'd and declar'd by the Primitive Church of Chriſt in the Three Creeds, Four Firſt General Councils, and Harmony of the Fathers.* After which you add, *This, I hope, is plain dealing, and no wriggling; and here we take up our ſtand, let him endeavour to draw us whither he can.* Never fear it, Sir, you are out of danger of being *drawn* any whither. Ten thouſand Cart-Ropes will not go round you, and we muſt be at leaſt Twenty Years in faſtening them. But let's examin this your particular Rule. 1. I ask, whether, ſince Differences uſe to be *Eſſential*, theſe words, [*own'd and declar'd by the Primitive Church*, &c.] which are found in the Difference of your Rule from that of others, be at all *Eſſential*, or not: If *not Eſſential*, ſince, if you be Orthodox, you ought to have a *Rule* eſſentially diſtinct from that of Hereticks and Sectaries, what is this Eſſentially-different Rule of yours; for 'tis this we are enquiring after? If you ſay *'tis Eſſential*; then Scripture had not all the due power to regulate you as to your Faith, without their additional Light: And, by conſequence, Scripture

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is not your *Only* and *Intire* Rule, as you ever pretended hitherto; ſince *theſe* are *Part* of it. 2 When you ſay your Rule is Scripture, plainly delivering a Senſe, &c. I ſuppoſe you muſt mean *ſuch a particular Senſe* as is *of Faith* with you: and can any more be requir'd to your *particular* Rule than *Scripture plainly delivering your particular Faith?* Certainly you will not ſay it. For, there is the *Divine Authority* in the Scripture, which is the Formal Motive of *Divine Faith.* There is *Plainneſs*, which gives it a *Directive* Vertue, and qualifies it for a *Rule*; and the Clear Light of this *plain Rule* muſt ſhine bright upon the particular Tenets you hold, for 'tis to ſhine there, and no where elſe. Which once put, what can all the other, eſteem'd by you but Human Authorities, ſerve for? Can they add *weight* to the Divine Authority, or *clear* that to us which is already ſo *plain* by Scripture? 3. Pray be candid, and tell us, After a thing is *plain in Scripture*, are you to value a ſtraw, what either *Primitive Church*, *Creeds*, or *Fathers* ſay? I dare ſay you will grant you are not. Wherefore, all theſe are utterly uſeleſs, unleſs they be pretended to give you ſome light to *interpret* Scripture. But this cannot be neither; both becauſe you tell us here *plain Scripture is your Rule*, and it would not be *plain*, but *obſcure*, if it needed an *Explainer*: Beſides, you put this as a *conſtitutive difference* of your *Rule*, and yet deny'd that any *Interpretation* of Scripture is ſuch, but *Extrinſical* to it. 'Tis then a great Myſtery ſtill, how theſe Human Authorities affect your General Rule, or influence your Faith already had by *plain Scripture*, or to what end they ſerve but for a Show only. 4. The *Lutherans* proceed upon all theſe as much as you, and yet hold a *Reall* Preſence of Chriſt's *very* Body in the Sacrament, as much as we do. So that *this* does not difference you in your Grounds or Rule from all

other Sects; for ſure you will not deny *that* to be a Sect, that holds an Errour, which Dr. *St.* has taken ſuch pains to prove is *Idolatry*. My laſt queſtion ſhall be, Whether your *ſober Enquirers* are not to come to their *particular Faith*, by this their *particular Rule of Faith*? And, ſince 'tis Evident they muſt, we would know next how many of them are to arrive at any Faith at all? For it will take up many Years to examin and compare all the *Fathers*, and be ſure of their *Harmony* with one another, and with the Scripture too. Nay, the Duration of the World will be too ſhort to compaſs that Satisfaction, if we may believe the * Biſhop of *Downs*, who aſſures us, That out of the Fathers ſucceeding the Primitive Times, *both ſides eternally and inconfutably ſhall bring Sayings for themſelves reſpectively.* Can any man living make Senſe of ſuch ſtuff, or ever come at his Faith by ſuch a Rule?

* Diſſuaſive from Popery, P 7.

57. For this laſt Reaſon chiefly, I affirm'd, That not one Proteſtant in a million follow'd Dr. *St*'s Rule, but honeſtly follow'd the Tradition of their own Church, Paſtours or Fathers; that is, believ'd as they had been *educated*. To the firſt part of this Aſſertion you ſay little, but that if there be any Fault, 'tis the Fault of *the People only*. But if this *peculiar Rule* of yours, which takes in the ſeeing your Senſe of Scripture *own'd and declar'd by the Primitive Church, Four firſt General Councils, and the Harmony of the Fathers*, be to be followed e're you can come at your Faith; I doubt the Fault will prove to be in the *Rule*. For very few Perſons have Learning, fewer Leiſure enough, and none of them ſecurity of having any Faith by this Method; unleſs you could enſure their Salvation by inſpiring thoſe who are ignorant with competent Learning to underſtand *all the Fathers* and their *Harmony*; and withal, by letting them good long Leaſes of their Lives; which I

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am of opinion you cannot. The ſecond part, that they follow'd the Method of Tradition, puts you in a marvellous jocund humour; and, as if you had forgot your way (a thing not unuſual with you) you ask, all amaz'd, *Where are we now? In the Church of* Rome *e're we are aware of it: We are all good* Roman-Catholicks *on a ſudden, we are become an Infallible Church, &c.* and away you run with the Jeſt, laughing and giggling as if you had found a Mare's Neſt. Surceaſe your fears, good Sir, you are not a jot the nearer being Catholicks for following *your* own Tradition. It reaches no farther than *John Calvin*, *Martin Luther*, or ſome ſuch Reforming Heroe; and there it ends and ſtops in a flat *Novelty*. Whereas Catholicks abhor a Tradition that has any known Beginning, or takes a Name from any Partieular Author, or has any Original but Chriſt, his Apoſtles, and the Church in the very firſt Age, who were the Original Deliverers of it to the next, and ſo to the ſucceeding ones. Pray Sir, what's become of your Jeſt? All I ſaid, was, that *You* **followed the Way of Tradition, however miſplac'd*; I prov'd it by Reaſons and Inſtances; you hint ſome, omit others, and pervert the reſt. You tell us, 'tis all *Scriptural Tradition*. But we will truſt our Eyes and Experience before your bare Word. We ſee ſome taught before they can read; we ſee them Catechiz'd in Churches, and they repeat and believe what's there told them, tho' Scripture be not quoted for the diſtinct Paſſages. We ſee them read the Scripture afterwards; but we ſee withal not One in Thouſands truſts his own Judgment of *Diſcretion* for the ſenſe of it; but, without reluctancy or jealouſie, accepts that which his Paſtours aſſign to it; eſpecially in Spiritual Points, or Myſteries of Faith, about which we are chiefly diſcourſing. But do not your ſelf incline to admit (as much as we can expect from a man that affects not too much

* First Letter, p. 27. l. 3, 4.

candour) that very thing you so laugh at here. I affirm'd, that *Not one in a million trusts of relying on your Rule of Faith, in order to make choice of their Faith*, &c. This you answer with *hems* and *haks*: *Tho' I fear —— yet I hope he is out in his Account —— I am apt to think they are more attentive —— Let be it as he would have it*, &c. Now, since they must either have their Faith by Reliance on their Pastours and Preachers, delivering it to them, and educating them in it, that is, by some kind of *Tradition*; or else by relying on *Scripture*; * and your self seems to doubt, or rather in a manner grants it, That they have it not the *later* way; you must at least *doubt* that they have it by *the Way of Tradition*. But your Fancy was so big with your empty Jest, that you had forgot what you had allow'd but a little before.

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* Ibid.

58. Thus, Sir, I have trac'd you punctually step by step; not (as is your constant use) pickt out a few words scatter'd here and there: which you thought you might most commodiously pervert: wherefore I have reason to expect the same exact measure from you. The Sum of your Answer is manifestly this. Shuffles and wilful Mistakes without number; Evasions endless; Falsifications frequent; Godly Talk frivolous; Jests groundless; and all these brought in still to stop Gaps when your Reason was *Nonplust*. Be pleas'd to leave off your Affected Insincerities; otherwise I must be forc't to Expose them yet farther; than which there can be no Task more Ungrateful imposed upon

Your Servant,

J. S.

ERRATA. Page 3. l. 28. Read *both of us*. p. 10. l. ult. *find it in*. p. 11. l. 11. *notice there*. p. 21. l. 24. *go forwards*. p. 22. l. 27. *Secret. Again*. p. 23. l. 9. *as I had not*. p. 32. l. 30. *Is it a Way*. Ibid. l. 32. *upon it?* p. 39. l. 7. *Your Reason is, because*. p. 44. l. 17. *may hap*. p. 45. l. 5. *Gift*. Ibid. l. 32. *Prince of*. p. 46. l. 7. *it. Whether*. p. 48. l. 27. *almost*. p. 53. l. 12. *Adherers*. p. 57. l. 14. *to be at a loss*. Ibid. l. ult. *discover'd it*. p. 60. l. 8. *Speculaters*. p. 62. l. 9. *Is not so explicitly or*. p. 63. l. 28. *formally and*. p. 73. l. 13. *other, then*.

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